

# **FOUR STORIES OF SUPERWOMEN**

- Manifestation of feminine characteristics in successful leading of animation productions

Master's Degree Programme in Creative Business Management

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# **1. Introduction**

I became interested in this topic for a few reasons. Above all I have had a short but rapid career development in a Finnish animation studio. I began my career in animation as a production assistant and developed into a production manager in a matter of less than two years due to unusual circumstances. In a normal situation this would have taken me five to six years. During my challenging career in animation I learned many things, for example that a delicate and careful handling of creative people was an essential part of my job. I noticed myself being rather nursing and caring with them.

In the summer and autumn of 2013 I met female leaders with long experience in animation productions through work and was fascinated by them. I only got to pick their brains for short periods of time and wished I could work and learn from someone like them. I really wanted to hear how they had handled difficult situations and seek tips and tricks to not only make my own career as successful as possible but also to enable better management of production and people. Little did I know that my chance would come in the form of this thesis.

I came across many articles concerning bad leadership, good leadership as well as women in leadership. I became interested in bringing another approach to mainstream understanding of leadership by drawing on the experiences of female leaders and their narratives.

I took a study leave from work and met up with my professor to discuss the topic of my thesis. After I heard from my professor that there have been indications that women are especially suitable as leaders in creative industries, I became fascinated and saw an opportunity to put my connections to good account. The first article I read suggested that there were not so many empirically based studies on women in the creative sector and there was especially a lack of gender-disaggregated data. Moreover I had always been intrigued by women's equality and the difference between female and male leaders. Through my own experience in animation I felt that



women possessed skills and certain womanly power that seemed to work well but I couldn't pin point what it exactly was. Therefore my specific interest was in the role of women and of feminine characteristics in managing animation productions. I wanted to find out if the female leaders used feminine characteristics when managing the projects and if used, how did they use them and in which context. Was there a connection with how women lead animation productions to how successful they are?

Although I wanted to avoid carrying out an assumption of fixed biological feminine characteristics, inevitably the studies suggested that what are called feminine characteristics tended to emerge more among women. Furthermore the feminine identity seems to be culturally set in social constructions as certain behavior expectancy and as division of gender roles. Women's tendency to possess more of the feminine characteristics was one of the reasons I chose only women as my interviewees. The second was the fact that I was interested specifically in women and leadership. In order to unveil the secrets I started studying feminine characteristics in the history of leadership theory while alongside studying gender theory. Researching in those areas lead me to study leadership styles that incorporated feminine characteristics in their theory. While studying those theories I found that many of the theories possessing the feminine characteristics had a strong connection to ethics and values. Therefore I included studies of transformational leadership, relational leadership, authentic leadership and moral intelligence to my repertoire. The theories claimed that ethics, values and morals were the foundation of a good and sustainable leadership that influence a great deal the long-term success of an organization and the well being of the workforce. This area of the theory became one of the pre-set themed questions of my interviews and also ended up as one of the main themes for the results of the research.

The research method I wanted to use was the narrative interview that could bring out genuine, personal experiences from the perspective of the interviewee. Through the narratives it is possible to extract working knowledge and turn it into transformative learning. I chose the four female leaders from animation as interviewees because they showcased the leadership style and behavior I looked up to. They came across as calm, authentic, charismatic and fair. The story-telling enabled them to use their own

language and meanings that are specific for the industry. The aim of the research was to describe and interpret the received information from interviewees on how they have managed their productions and creative workers, solved problems and developed their careers as women. However as I had studied all the theory my aims changed more towards the manifestation of feminine characteristics in the leadership, the female advantage, the ethics and what are the things that molded them to who they are today. In the end I started to envision the female leaders as Superheroes when understanding the scope of their work, their high ethics and how much they worked selflessly for the good of others.

## **2. Leadership and Gender**

### **2.1 Defining leadership**

Tannebaum et al. (cited in Joglu & Wood 2006, p. 236-237, Tannebaum, Weschler & Massarik 2013, p. 24) define leadership “as an interpersonal influence, exercised in situations and directed through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals”. In today’s world of leadership not only is the ability to influence important, but also motivation and enabling others to reach their goals (Joglu & Wood 2006, p. 237). Additionally Fletcher (2003, p. 5) emphasizes post-heroic leadership as a social process in which the human interactions play a significant part as dynamic, multi-directional, collective activity.

Leadership always involves attempts on the part of a leader (influencer) to affect the behavior of a follower (influence) or followers in a situation. As such the definition is not attached to formal roles but instead on all interpersonal interaction, in which the attempt to influence is the intention.

Tannebaum, Weschler & Massarik (2013, p. 24) further discuss the goal orientation of the leaders and how they use communication as a tool to effectively influence the follower’s direction to a specific goal.

### **2.2 Gender and theories of leadership**

#### **2.2.1 Feminine characteristics in the history of leadership theory**

In order to discuss the feminine characteristics in leadership there is a need to look back into history. The early leadership theory research from 1940’s to 1980’s were made in a male context since there were very few, if any, women in management roles. As an addition the feminine characteristics were not considered as part of the

leadership theories. The paucity of women in management throughout history has led to the perception that only men possess the characteristics of an effective leader and this is still true even today. The early leadership research in behavioral theory did suggest that having a concern for people was a quality for an effective leader and it was seen more as a feminine attribute. Alongside autocratic/directive leadership the concept of democratic leadership evolved in the 1960's and 70's. The democratic leadership style came from America and was described as an open, trusting and follower-orientated relationship that would encourage the followers, guide them and reward them. This type of leader was described as caring, considerate and easy to compromise as well as responsible and attached to their followers, hence the characteristics could be considered more feminine. Since the democratic leadership style emerged with feminine characteristics, it can be considered that the view on women in management started to become more positive (Jogulu & Wood, 2006, p. 239-240).

In the early 90's Eagly & Johnson and Rosener (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 242) found that the value of feminine characteristics started to show up in leadership literature along with research that women had a more participative or democratic style of leadership. Women also started to take on management roles, which made them visible and therefore more recognized.

In their meta-analytical review Eagly & Johnson (cited in Jogulu & Wood, 2006, p. 242) found differences in men and women while examining gender and leadership. The research found that even though women and men were compatible in leading in task-orientated work in interpersonal manner, women still showcased a more participative/democratic style whereas men had a more directive/autocratic style. Another study by Eagly & Karau (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 242) indicated that women more often became social leaders exhibiting agreement with other team members and solidarity of views.

Stead & Elliott (2009, p. 37-38) describe developments in the recent years as follows: "The literature has heralded feminine characteristics and ways of working as important, yet theory and practice continue to adopt masculine values that reify

existing power relations as the norm. Writing about women and leadership appears to sustain a picture of women enabling rather than enacting leadership, and so the *status quo* of the heroic individual male leader remains”.

### **2.2.2 Leadership and gender roles**

“Things are the way they are by virtue of the fact that men are men and women are women – a division perceived to be natural and rooted in biology, producing in turn profound psychological, behavioral, and social consequences. The structural arrangements of a society are presumed to be responsive to these differences.”

(Fenstermaker & West 2002, p.5)

“It is a belief, widely entertained, that there is a great difference in the mental constitution of the two sexes, just as there is in their physical conformation. The power and susceptibilities of women are as noble as those of men, but they are thought to be different and, in particular, it is considered that they have not the same power of intense labour as men are endowed with.”

(Neave, cited in Henry 2009, p. 149)

Loganathan & Krishnan (2010, p. 53) define gender as a “social construct, which is used to indicate psychological, social and cultural difference”. They continue describing that gender entails many characteristics to each sex, male and female, and what is expected and normal in each of their behavior. In equivalent terms, gender totals from the amount of femininity and masculinity a person possess (Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 47).

Stets & Burke (cited in Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p. 55) define gender roles as “shared expectations of one’s behavior given one’s sex”. Considering gender roles in relation to leadership, there are two sets of characteristics that Eagly (cited in Eagly &

Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 5) suggests; agentic and communal. The characteristics of behavior for agentic attribute in employment settings are speaking assertively, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity directed to assigned tasks and making problem-focused suggestions. These attributes are considered to be more present with men than women. Communal characteristics of behavior in employment settings on the other hand are speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting other's direction, supporting and soothing others, and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 5). These are considered to be more present in women. Women being communal rather than focusing on oneself is also supported by Kumra and Vinnicombe (cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 380). When it comes to female leaders, the communal characteristics can conflict with their behavior in relation to the typical leader role. The agentic characteristics attached to the typical leader role are not necessarily expected or desired from female leaders (Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p. 55). In fact, their subordinates can perceive them rather negatively as Kumra and Vinnicombe conclude (cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 380). Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt (2001, p. 9 & 15) laid out an interesting dilemma in the female gender roles and leadership as follows "Conforming to their gender role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming to their leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role".

"Leadership is gendered" claim Boldry, Wood, & Kashy; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt; Heilman, Pratto, Yoder (cited in Yoder 2001, p. 815). Therefore Yoder (2001, p. 815-816) reminds that performing leadership can vary between men and women and that leadership doesn't take place in a 'genderless vacuum'. An example given by Fletcher (2003, p. 12; Fletcher 1999) is that when women practice a relational leadership in which sharing the power, enabling and contributing to the development of others is purely seen as feminine, selfless giving and mothering. However Yoder (2001, p. 815) adds that women tend to become aware of their gender role in leadership and in certain contexts women can become more effective than in others.

It can be argued that women tend to have a more transformational leadership (explained more in detail later p. 15) style due to the lack of acceptance of transactional leadership among their subordinates that is in relation to gender roles. Garcia & Lopez-Zafra and Wolfram et al. (cited in Rowley, Hossain & Barry 2010, p.85) found that the gender of the leader does have an effect on both managers' and subordinates' reactions. This however can be an advantage for women, who by female gender roles tend to foster a more feminine style, to practice more sensitively interpersonal and inspirational leadership characterized by transformational leadership (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 16-20).

Findings from Gutek and Morasch and Ridgeway (cited in Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 6) show that gender roles influence the implicit background identity of men and women in the workplace. "This influence of gender roles on organizational behavior occurs, not only because people react to leaders in terms of gendered expectancies and leaders respond in turn, but also because most people have internalized gender roles to some extent" (Wood, Christensen, Hebl & Rothgerber cited in Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p.7-8). It can therefore be concluded that the culture and the surroundings in which the female leader has grown and been exposed to have much to do with how they blend their gender role to the leadership role and the behavior (Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p.55).

Identity as such and its construction in relation to everyday reality is an interesting matter. Berger & Luckmann (1966, p.194) describe it as follows "Identity is, of course, a key element of subjective reality and, like all subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society. Identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. Conversely, the identities produced by the interplay of organism, individual consciousness and social structure react upon the given social structure, maintaining it, modifying it, or even reshaping it". They continue by saying that "Theories about identity are always embedded in a more general interpretation of reality; they are 'built into' the symbolic universe and its theoretical legitimations, and vary with the character of the latter"(Berger &

Luckmann 1966, p.195). The characteristics of gender are formed through society and are the basis of identity that determines the roles at workplace and home as stated by Stets & Burke (cited in Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p. 54).

Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt (2001, p. 9) state that the disharmony perceived between female gender role and the leader role could result from the exact definition of the leader role, activation of the female gender role in a situation and individual's own approval of traditional gender roles. Sakata & Kurokawa (1992, p. 201) also state that "sex differences in leader behavior appears not to be seen in each individual strategy, but is seen rather as a phenomenon which integrates situational and other factors". The studies carried out by Eagly, Karau & Makhijani (cited in Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 17) indicated that when it came to gender-incongruent leadership roles, there might be lack (or perceived lack) of task-relevant organization and authority in their environments. It can be claimed that there are certain industries and environments where feminine characteristics in a leader's behavior are especially suitable and can enable better management. This idea is also supported by Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 84) as follows "The gender of the leader is a significant variable in organizational situations. The attributes that make the leader effective are therefore likely to be different depending upon their gender, but also, different situations should theoretically suit the different genders". This leads to the contingency theory, which will explain the situational factors influencing leadership.

Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 83) claim that leadership styles and behaviors should be adapted and filtered through a gender lens in order to be relevant to both genders. In practice it is inevitable that gender schema defines how the behavior is understood, perceived and experienced by leaders and the subordinates in a social process of leadership (Fletcher 2003, p. 11, Stead & Elliott 2009, p. 37). In turn we adjust our self-image and social identity, which largely consists of our gender identity (Fletcher 2003, p. 9). Therefore West and Zimmerman (cited in Fletcher 2003, p. 9) suggest that we "do gender" in a social process like leadership. West and Zimmerman further explain that "doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine "natures".



“Doing gender” disrupts moving from heroic leadership representing masculinity to post heroic leadership representing femininity. The new models of leadership (in post heroic leadership) that acknowledge the success factor of relational wisdom and coaching/developing people, however do not consider the linkage to femininity. This can be due to post heroic leadership going against not only traditional presumptions about individualism and business success but also against gender-linked beliefs about these concepts and practices (Fletcher 2003, p.9). As mentioned earlier in the chapter that looked into feminine characteristics in the history of leadership theory, Stead & Elliott (2009, p. 37) support Fletcher’s view by stating that in the recent years the status quo of the heroic individual male leader still exists in theory and practice.

The way that women leaders try to overcome and challenge the difficulties they may have due to their gender are according to Lord & Preston, Meyerson, Swan, Hartman and Mathieu (cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 380) such as mixing feminine and masculine behavior, using flirtatious banter, exposing gendered organizational practices through naming and training of how gender operates at the specific work environment and by taking on the role of an extremist driving a social change at workplace. Balasubramanian & Krishnan (2012, p. 47) support the idea of mixing the feminine and masculine qualities in characteristics in leadership order to get the best possible outcome.

## **2.3 Characteristics of a good leader**

### **2.3.1 Hybridity of leadership and management**

The challenge of today’s managers and leaders is to master both feminine and masculine attributes when leading and managing knowledge workers. Notwithstanding, they both share the same attributes such as influencing and working with people and working towards a goal. Drucker (cited in How-to Guide Management 2009) concludes his insights on motivation of workers as follows: “one

does not ‘manage’ people. The task is to lead them. And the goal is to make productive the specific strengths and knowledge of every individual”. By this he also meant that it is not enough only to give the task, but there also needs to be a motivational factor, a purpose (Murray 2010, p. 3). One cannot separate the tasks attached to each of role as they are complimentary to each other. The success factor of an effective leader/manager is the hybridity of the attributes (Mikoluk 2013, How-To Guide Management 2009, Murray 2010, p. 4).

Bennis (cited in Murray 2010, p. 3-4) lists the differences as follows;

- The manager administers; the leader innovates.
- The manager focuses on systems and structure; the leader focuses on people.
- The manager relies on control; the leader inspires trust.
- The manager has a short-range view; the leader has a long-range perspective.
- The manager asks how and when; the leader asks what and why.
- The manager has his or her eye always on the bottom line; the leader’s eye is on the horizon.
- The manager imitates; the leader originates.
- The manager accepts the *status quo*; the leader challenges it.
- The manager is the classic good soldier; the leader is his or her own person.
- The manager does things right; the leader does the right thing.

Murray (2010, p. 6) concludes as follows “today’s middle managers often find themselves heading projects that involve others who don’t directly report to them. In these situations, giving orders, military-style, doesn’t cut in. Middle managers, even more than their CEO employers, must learn to exercise influence without clear authority”.

In this thesis when talking about management and leadership, these two things go hand in hand as hybrid. Also the variation of job titles with the interviewees make no difference as they all are involved with influencing people and working towards a goal.

### **2.3.2 Definition of an effective leader**

It has always been difficult to measure a leader's effectiveness as found by Murensky (cited in Rosete & Ciarrochi 2005, p. 390). However, it is important in this thesis to describe what makes a good leader. Bass (cited in Ricketts 2009, no page number) suggests that a good leader is both a successful leader and an effective leader. The difference of these terms is that one can be a successful leader and get the job done. An effective leader in turn gets the job done and on top of that also affects the attitude/motivation of the subordinates and creates commitment towards the group or organization (Rosete & Ciarrochi 2005, p. 396; Ricketts 2009, no page number). This idea is also supported by Nahavandi (2014, p.5) as follows: “ leaders are effective when their followers achieve their goals, can function well together, and can adapt to changing demands from external forces”. He continues to define the three elements as goal achievement, smooth internal processes and external adaptability. As an addition the findings from a study conducted by Rosete & Ciarrochi (2005, p. 396) revealed that the subordinates and direct managers considered leaders with higher emotional intelligence as effective leaders.

The characteristics of an effective leader by Ricketts (2009, no page number) are as follows;

- Efficient coaching skills
- Confidence
- Consistency between word and action
- Creativity
- Empathic listening skills
- Visionary tendencies
- Ability to inspire
- Long-term focus
- Ability to balance individual needs and team needs
- Awareness of realistic conditions
- Strong self-esteem

- Sense of priorities
- Service mentality
- Sincerity
- Technical or contextual expertise
- Trust
- Willingness to share responsibility
- Willingness to share credit or recognition

Studies show that transformational leadership (explained later in this thesis) is perceived as effective leadership style measured by the effort the subordinates are willing to do and their satisfaction with the leader as proposed by Bass (cited in Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p. 58) and Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 85).

Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 85) suggest that in order to be perceived as an effective leader, one should be able to combine the attributes from both gender stereotypes.

### **2.3.3 Transformational and transactional leadership theory**

Looking at more contemporary theories of leadership styles revealed gender differences and ways in which men and women differ in leadership. Burns (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 243) described two different types of leadership with political leaders, transactional and transformational leadership styles. Bass (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 243 and Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 11) then viewed this theory with the contemporary leadership theory and from there enabled observation of gender differences in leadership styles. In his opinion the analyses at that time were missing important aspects of effective leadership that the transformational leadership style possessed.

Characteristics of transactional leadership from Bass & Avolio, Mandell & Pherwani and Klenke (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 243):

- strong masculine qualities
- transaction between leaders and followers – reward or disciplining based on performance
- competitiveness
- hierarchical authority
- high control
- analytical problem solving

Characteristics of transformational leadership from Bass, Avolio, Klenke, Mandell & Pherwani, Judge & Piccolo and Omar & Davidson (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 243-46):

- feminine leadership
- cooperation
- collaboration
- lower control
- relational-oriented
- nurturing and caring
- proactive problem solving based on intuition and rationality
- creating awareness of mission
- developing followers to higher level of ability and potential
- motivational
- inspirational
- supportive of creativity
- attending to the needs of the follower and listening to concerns
- acting as mentor
- realigning values and norms

Balasubramanian & Krishnan (2012, p. 48) suggest that a transformational leader has to be both tough and caring and in fact both masculine and feminine attributes come together in the transformational leadership style. “Toughness means honesty, fairness, not giving in easily to pressure, and trusting others. Entrepreneurial skills, self-confidence and persuasion powers require toughness. Leaders who command respect become the role model to their subordinates” (Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p.

48). However, feminine attributes are more positively associated with transformational leadership as suggested by Ross & Offermann (cited in Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 48).

The quality of realigning values and norms, say researcher Avolio et al., Bennis & Nanus, Tichy & Devanna, Tichy & Ulrich (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 244), is emphasized as a valuable attribute for transformational leader and is especially important when enabling motivation among followers and pursuing creative problem solving methods. This has been validated by other researches as well such as Avolio & Bass, Bennis & Nanus, House & Shamir and Shamir, House & Arthur (cited in Jung 2001, p. 187) who claim that transformational leaders aims to transform the followers' values and self-concepts in order for them to aspire to higher levels of potential and motivation in a natural way. Burns (cited in Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p. 58) saw transformational leadership attached to morals and as a way for both the leader and the subordinates to improve human conduct and ethical aspiration. Bass (cited in Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 49) claims that transformational leaders have integrity and fairness as their prime values. Also Krishnan (cited in Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 46) identified patterns in the value systems of transformational leaders. The leaders would give high priority to the 'world at peace' and to being 'responsible' and to values involving others rather than themselves.

A study conducted by Loganathan & Krishnan (2010, p. 64) and one carried out by Hautala (cited in Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 46) showed that emotional intelligence is connected to transformational leadership. Leaders who had feminine traits such as compassion, warmth and sympathy scored higher in transformational leadership. This study also indicated that female leaders had higher emotional intelligence than male leaders (Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p. 65) that enhanced the transformational leadership style in them.

An empirical study on managers by Mandell & Pherwani (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 244) reported that females scored higher on the transformational leadership scale compared to males. Also Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 86) point out the main key lesson from their review is that “ it is women who possess more of the

desirable transformational leadership attributes that make for effective leaders in an increasingly globalized world”. Furthermore Powell & Graves (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p. 244) state as follows “women are better suited than men to serve as leaders in the ways required in the global economy”. The Creative Economy Report (2013) states that creative economy is the most rapidly growing sector of the world economy with its vast development, job creations, income generation and export earnings. The report also states that human creativity and innovation on both individual and group level are the key drives. Transformational leadership has a strong connection enhancing creativity in groups. The participative, considerate, democratic and problem-solving behavior linked to transformational leaders fosters creativity and divergent thinking among subordinates as studied by Hage & Dewar, Maier, Redmond, Sosik and Jung (cited in Jung 2001, p. 187 & 193). Looking at these facts one could conclude that there is a need for transformational leadership in today’s global economy, especially in creative industries, in which we see a higher frequency of women as leaders, which is also stated by Jogulu & Wood (2006, p. 246) and Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 86). Additionally the qualities of transformational leadership showcasing the more feminized leader behavior is required more in flatter organizations that need team-work and consensus style of management as stated by Wajcman and Omar & Davidson (cited in Jogulu & Wood 2006, p.244).

A study carried out by Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt (2001, p. 13) indicates that there were no differences between men and women in the task-oriented style, however, the research showed small but significant tendency for women to be more democratic and interpersonally oriented. Other studies carried out by Hackman, Furniss, Hills & Paterson and Ross & Offermann (cited in Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 12) also found that “subordinates perceive greater correspondence between leaders’ feminine personality attributes and their transformational style than their transactional style”. Adding up to this, Avolio (cited in Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p. 59) concluded that through transformational leadership the subordinates were more willing to put that extra effort and also showcased commitment, trust, satisfaction, unity and efficiency.

Because in the past manager's capabilities have been connected to a task-orientated behavior, which men were seen to possess more than women, it was socially accepted as a tendency for men to take up the leadership roles (Jogulu & Wood 2006, p.242). Men have been in the managerial roles longer than women and that is what people are used to (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 3). The social role theory of sex differences and similarities by Eagly, Wood & Diekmann (cited in Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p.5) suggest that leadership role isn't the only thing influencing the behavior of a leader. As Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt (2001, p. 5) puts it "In addition, leaders elicit expectancies based on people's categorization of them as male and female. These expectancies constitute gender roles, which are the shared beliefs that apply to individuals on the basis of their socially identified sex. These roles are assumed to follow from perceivers' observations of men and women as concentrated in different social roles in the family and paid employment". Often men and women can behave according to the pre-set gender roles of the society, which affects how they expect the opponent sex to behave and more importantly, how they identify in the role themselves.

Moreover, even though post-heroic leadership, the collective social practices of people, is acknowledged, Fletcher and Ford (cited in Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011, p. 1430) still found that the feminized relational leadership style is often unappreciated and male and female leaders find it difficult to employ since the transactional, masculine style of leadership is very present in today's organizations (Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011, p. 1430). On the other hand, Ford (cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 387) found in a behavior analysis of one female director that by using a more masculine, transactional behavior style while still showcasing the more feminine, transformational behavior with her subordinates and senior colleagues, she gained more positive outcomes. This finding indicates that women use multiple behavior models in order to perform well (in leadership) as leaders and is also supported by other researchers such as Kanter, Swan, Mavin & Bryans (cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 387). In all likelihood the trend today is more and more towards the importance for men and women to practice both transactional and transformational leadership styles and utilize them in different situations (Dodd 2012, p. 153, 172).



Yoder (2001, p. 825) found evidence that effective transformational leadership also required the suitable context to practice the style in. She concludes that leadership exists between the two styles of leadership, the transactional style and the transformational style, and is very much influenced by the gendered context, the people operating in it as well as the leader her/himself (Yoder; Garg & Krishnan, Shamir & Howell cited in Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 46).

Balasubramanian & Krishnan (2012 p. 49) question the ethics of transformational leaders and claim that such leaders could become virtuous or villainous depending on their values. Bass & Steidlmeier (cited in Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 49) criticize the transformational leadership style as follows; “Transformational leadership 1) lends itself to amoral puffery since it makes use of impression management; (2) is antithetical to organizational learning and development involving shared leadership, equality, consensus and participative decision-making; (3) encourages followers to go beyond their own self-interests for the good of the organization and even emotionally engages followers irrationally in pursuit of evil ends contrary to the followers’ best interests; (4) manipulates followers along a primrose path on which they lose more than they gain; and (5) lacks the checks and balances of countervailing interests, influences, and power to avoid dictatorship and oppression of a minority by a majority”.

### **2.3.4 Contingency theory**

Contingency theory’s idea is that different leadership styles are needed in different situations. It means that the main variable in examining effective leadership is the situation. Fielder (cited in Rowley, Hossain & Barry 2010, p. 84) was one of the first ones behind this theory and he concluded that changing the leadership style was not in fact the key for being an effective leader. Instead he thought that the leader should be the one changing the conditions of the situation. Another contingency research done by Bush & Bell (cited in Rowley, Hossain & Barry 2010, p. 84) state that it’s not the situation that the leader should change, but their behavior towards the situation. As Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 84) suggest, it could be the case of combining the

two by understanding the situation the leader is in and making decisions based on that.

Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 86) conclude after examining environments and theoretical perspectives towards genders and leadership as follows: “Contingency theories, where the situation is the key, are a far more reliable way of guiding a leader’s behavior regarding what would make her or him effective. If situations are the primary influence on the efficacy of different leadership styles, no one golden set of attributes exists that signifies a globally effective leader”. Situations, environments, external/ internal factors and people are all attributes that affect the behavior and the type of leadership required to manage in different settings.

An important element with contingency theory in leadership is the follower’s characteristics. As researches from Seokhwa et al., Epitropaki & Robin and Walumbwa et al. (cited in Rowley, Hossain & Barry 2010, p. 85) have concluded, the follower’s perception of the leader has a lot to do with the characteristics the follower appreciates him/herself. As an addition the different types of personalities of followers demanded different kind of leadership from the leader to be effective.

When looking at the contingency theory and female gender, there seems to be several commonly encountered environments in organizations in which females stereotypically could be more effective as stated by Krishnan et al. (cited in Rowley, Hossain & Barry 2010, p. 84). They state them as follows “In well-resourced environments they noted that women with their problem-solving skills would be good as leaders”. They continue explaining about the environments and qualities women possess as follows “ dynamic unstable environments would require the female stereotype’s ability to alleviate stress of colleagues, to manage conflict resolution, and the ability to adapt to change. In complex environments, their ability to share information and power would be vital”. Ryan and Haslam (cited in Rowley, Hossain & Barry 2010, p. 85) propose similar idea of that unstable environment is well suited for leaders with feminine attributes of creative thinking and good communication skills.

Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 86) propose that a situation is the main driver guiding a leader's behavior in making him/her effective. If this is the case, there is no one style of leadership that works on a global level effectively.

### **2.3.5 Relational leadership theory**

Recent leadership developments tend to go more towards ethical awareness, socially orientated and systemic approaches as indicated by Cooper, Gray, Smith Day, Collins, Collins & Holton (cited in Edwards, Elliott, Iszatt-White & Schedlitzki 2013, p. 5). Fletcher (2003, p. 7) additionally notes that new leadership requires relational skills and interaction. To gain a deeper understanding of the essential nature of leadership as a relationship, this thesis will look more into the approach of relational leadership. Many contemporary approaches considered in earlier chapters take leadership out from the everyday experiences and interactions of human beings. Graen & Uhl-Bien (cited in Dodd 2012, p. 156) claim that relationships are the key factor in how individuals develop as leaders. Additionally the study by Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011, p. 1429, 1431) found the leadership to be in experiences, dialogues, relationships and communities. Their conclusion was drawn from ethnographic research done among Federal Security Directors at the Transportation Security Authority in United States and found them talking a great deal about relationships with people. Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011, p. 1427-28) wanted to represent a way of thinking about leadership with practical relevance, without introducing models or recipes. In the words of Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011, p. 1443) "we present a different way of conceptualizing and enacting leadership that contributes to relational leadership theory by drawing attention to the 'mundane' yet revealing intentions, values and judgments that leaders see as crucial to leading in complex situations". Their aim was to:

- a) Contribute to contemporary leadership theory by offering a way to conceptualizing relational leadership as an inherently moral and dialogical practice, based on Ricoeur's notion of ethical selfhood and Bakhtin's work on dialogism.

- b) Contribute to leadership theory and practice by offering new kinds of action guiding anticipatory understandings (Shotter, 2008) that may sensitize leaders to the impact of their interactions and enable them to become more reflexive and ethical practitioners.

(Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011, p. 1428)

As they started to conceptualize relational leadership, Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011, p. 1433) found four main concepts and concluded that “leadership is a way of being-in-the-world; encompasses working out, dialogically, what is meaningful for others; means recognizing that working through differences is inherently a moral responsibility; and involves practical wisdom”. In the excerpts of interviews from their research Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011, p. 1433-1434) found that relational leading needs to be respectful, establishing trust and being-in-relation-to-others in the complexity of experience “that brings moral responsibility to treat people as human beings, of having ‘a heart, appreciating others, and encouraging them to grow and learn from each other”.

Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011, p. 1436) explain the importance of dialogue and the nature of the conversation and relationships in relational leadership: “relational leadership is about recognizing the heteroglossic nature of dialogue and the potentiality that lies within the interplay of voices within dialogic or conversational spaces”. Many times the significance hides in the subtle details of conversation in every-day situations (Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011, p 1443). The everyday life as explained by Berger & Luckmann (1966, p. 33) “presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and is subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world”. With the dialogue comes a fundamental responsibility to act and relate to moments in ethical ways, which Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011, p.1438) tie into relational integrity. Relational integrity is the concept of being morally righteous in judgments of situations where differences may occur, where there is doubt or questionable actions. It is about the responsibility that is fundamentally rooted into everyday situations. Cunliffe & Eriksen further characterize Ricoeur’s (cited in Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011, p. 1441) interpersonal ethics as an aspect of relational integrity “in which we act as moral agents in relation to social and institutional moral norms”. Relational integrity in a leader requires

emotional intelligence, sensitivity, compassion and ability to relate to others (Ivan 2012, p. 1723; Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011, p. 1438), which are very similar to the characteristics of transformational leadership mentioned earlier.

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011, p. 1441) found the use of practical wisdom among their interviewees in the research, which Fairhurst (cited in Cunliffe and Eriksen 2011, p. 1441) called local knowledge within their context. Practical wisdom can be thought to be common sense in a problematic situation and is presented by Berger & Luckmann (1966, p. 38) as follows “But even the unproblematic sector of everyday reality is so only until further notice, that is, until its continuity is interrupted by the appearance of a problem. When this happens, the reality of everyday life seeks to integrate the problematic sector into what is already unproblematic. Common-sense knowledge contains a variety of instructions as to how this is to be done”. Grint (cited in Cunliffe and Eriksen 2011, p. 1442) further indicates, “Practical wisdom takes us full circle back to Ghoshal’s call for moral responsibility in management, for it is about ethical action based on moral virtue and experience”. A leader with practical wisdom draws from experiences and one’s personal values and acts prudentially when making judgments in situations. Kane and Patapan (cited in Cunliffe and Eriksen 2011, p. 1442) add “a truly prudent person judges thoughtfully and acts decisively, reconciling the demands of the most important with those for the most pressing”.

There is a need for good leaders to become sensitive to the importance of interpersonal relations, how they interact, relate to others and what really matters in those relationships. The value of relational perspective in fact “offers a way of reconceptualizing relationships between leaders, organizational members and other stakeholders as an ongoing intersubjective shaping of social circumstances and surroundings, but also offers practical theories for creating collaborative relationships” (Cunliffe and Eriksen 2011, p. 1444-1445).

### **2.3.6 Authentic leadership theory**

George (cited in George, Sims, McLean & Mayer 2007, p. 130 & 138) emphasizes the importance of authentic leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as follows: “authentic leaders demonstrate a passion for their purpose, practice their values consistently, and lead with their hearts as well as their heads. They establish long-term, meaningful relationships and have the self-discipline to get results”. He added that he didn’t see any other way of establishing sustainable, long-term results in an organization. What separates authentic leadership from other leadership theories such as transformational leadership is what Avolio & Gardner (2005, p. 328) called the “root construct”, which works as a basis for other forms of positive leadership. Authentic leaders have a deep sense of themselves and they firmly position themselves on values and beliefs (Avolio & Gardner 2005, p.329). Bass & Steidlmeier (cited in Eagly 2005, p. 460) add that an authentic leader “is true to the self and others”.

According to Eagly (2005, p. 463) authenticity emerges from the transactions with the leaders and followers, therefore the leader’s values must be suitable for the community in which the follower’s values operate. Eagly continues explaining how the followers don’t need to know about the leader’s deep value commitments, but only that the values will serve their community in which the leader operates. The goals need to be incorporated in the shared values that benefit the larger community (Eagly 2005, p. 460).

Authentic leadership is something transformative one goes through in developing self-awareness from experiences. As Day, George and London (cited in Avolio & Gardner 2005, p. 324) suggest, authentic leadership is an emerging process in which the person continually becomes aware of her/his talents, sense of purpose, core values, strengths and beliefs. Authentic leaders usually have gone through something difficult in their lives such as loss of a job, personal illness, death of a close friend or relative, feelings of being excluded, discriminated against, and rejected by peers. What is of great value is when one is able to re-frame them by not settling as passive victims but instead rising above the challenge and becoming more humane and willing to be vulnerable. Avolio & Gardner (2005, p.330) claim that such leaders give

importance to certain ways of interacting with each other. Many studies suggest that authentic leadership emerges and develops from the leader's life stories and narratives and contribute to their understanding of who they are and how they could serve others (George, Sims, McLean & Mayer's 2007, p. 130-134, Shamir & Eilam cited in Avolio & Gardner 2005, p. 318).

Avolio & Gardner (2005, p. 331) conclude as follows; "We believe authentic leadership can make a fundamental difference in organizations by helping people find meaning and connection at work through greater self-awareness; by restoring and building optimism, confidence and hope; by promoting transparent relationships and decision-making that builds trust and commitment among followers; and by fostering inclusive structures and positive ethical climates".

Furthermore, for authentic leaders inner values are the ones giving more fulfillment than the need for external rewards or recognition. Finding that balance in extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (in line with the values) leads to fulfillment in one's work and happiness (George, Sims, McLean & Mayer (2007, p. 135-136).

### **2.3.7 Ethical behavior in leadership**

Balasubramanian & Krishnan (2012, p. 45) highlight the ongoing conversation about ethical behavior in an organization and how important it has become. They define business ethics as "rules, standards, codes or principles, which provide guidelines for morally correct behavior and truthfulness in specific situations". Culture, family and circumstances influence a person's values (Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 49).

For a leader it is important to bring the subordinates around the same values. "Efficient leaders have a vision in their mind, which is achieved through actions that abide by the societal laws. A commitment to integrity and ethical behavior provides stability for the organization and reassurance for those who rely on it. Effective leadership requires a commitment to developing and maintaining strong moral center.

Leaders must consistently demonstrate a high level of integrity in both thought and action (Kelvin, 2005)” (Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 49).

Balasubramanian & Krishnan (2012, p. 49) conclude that there are differences in the way women and men practice their moral reasoning and ethics. Women tend to base their decisions on care for people and looking at the situation and men base theirs on justice and rules. Women’s morals often encompass caring for people in need as suggested by White (cited in Balasubramanian & Krishnan 2012, p. 50)

What the leader bases the values on is of importance. The benefit of ethical leadership is subordinate’s satisfaction and dedication that is much required and needed in today’s organizations.

### **2.3.8 Moral intelligence**

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011, p. 1427) found leadership today to be “ego-centric without consideration of its affects on others”. To understand the bigger question they ask the burning question of “how can we conceive leadership in ways that emphasize the crucial nature of moral responsibility and encourage leaders to engage in moral debate?”.

It seems to be more complex to be a successful, good leader. Kalman (2011) suggests in his article that experts call the essential ingredient as moral intelligence. The principles attached to moral intelligence are integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness (Lennick & Kiel 2006).

Lennick & Kiel (2006) found through a neuroscientific study that moral is something we are born with. Even if our moral competence is something that can develop throughout life, it starts from when we are children. Doug Lennick further explains, “Moral intelligence is the mental capacity to determine how universal moral principles should be applied to my values, my goals and my actions”. When lecturing



on the four principles he noticed that people from all over the world had similar words that connected morale to integrity, responsibility and compassion, no matter what their ethnicity, religion or gender was (Doug Lennick's MBA presentation in University of Colorado).

When improvements start to happen, Lennick claims that we start to see our fellow human beings differently. Through self-awareness we understand that we are humans and we make mistakes, which enables us to more likely forgive others.

Lennick & Kiel (2006) emphasize the importance of creating environments with moral intelligence in integrity, responsibility, compassion and forgiveness that result in a sustainable success of organizations.

## **2.4 Leadership and creative industry**

Creative industries are rising as a significant sector in the global economy (The Creative Economy Report 2013, Dodd 2012, p.153, Henry 2009, p.143-144). Dodd highlights the fact that many leadership styles have been developed in order to enhance the management of creative industries. An example can be found in the United Kingdom, where the government funded a Cultural Leadership Programme aiming to develop dynamic and diverse leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Dodd 2012, p. 154).

The nature of creative industries is collaborative and collective and can be characterized as a mutual learning environment that fosters social interaction. Therefore the post-heroic leadership skills such as self-awareness, empathy, vulnerability and openness to learning from others regardless of their position is important as suggested by Fletcher (2003, p. 6).

In recent years there have been more and more women working in creative industries and women are seen as especially suited for creative industries (Henry 2009, p. 143-

144, Dodd 2012, p.158). They are claimed to possess multi-tasking skills, independence, self-reliance, autonomy, flexibility and adaptability making them very suitable for project-based organizations, like of creative industries, as noted by Gill (cited Henry 2009, p. 155). Hofstede's study (cited in Henry 2009, p. 152) showed that women possess less authoritarian management styles and display advanced negotiating and diplomatic skills. Therefore they are often managing a workforce that needs to be handled carefully, where 'diplomacy and a mother figure are required' as claimed by Tomlinson & Colgan (cited in Henry 2009, p. 152). Additionally creative industries offer the benefits of flexible working hours, which help women to accommodate family needs (Henry 2009, p. 155).

Despite all of this, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles in creative industries and can face the same glass ceiling as in other industries, many times due to gender-stereotypic perceptions (Henry 2009, p. 155, Dodd 2012, p. 158). Eagly & Carli, Lips & Keener (cited in Dodd 2012, p. 158) suggest that organizations might not think that the combination of leadership styles that women leaders provide is beneficial. Since women can find these issues a barrier, they are more likely to start up their own company (Dodd 2012, p. 158). Therefore Henry (2009, p. 155) suggests further research among women's experiences through in-depth insights within the creative industry, which could bring the barriers to light and from there spark design processes that would help women's progress in the industry.

### **3. Narrative research method**

#### **3.1 Definition of narrative research**

Lamnek, Hatch & Wisniewski, Riesman and Flick (cited in Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000, p. no page number) classify narrative interview as a qualitative research method. This method avoids the pre-structuring of an in-depth interview and is linked to everyday communication (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000, no page number) In order to obtain the genuine, personal experiences from the interviews I chose the narrative interview approach since humans are linguistic, social and cultural beings, who construct the perception of the world from the interaction with other human beings (See for instance ‘The social construction of reality’ by Berger & Luckmann 1966). As Alasuutari (cited in Cubrium & Holstein 1998, p. 163) claims “more and more, we are learning that life comes to us in the form of stories, articulated through storytelling”. Stead & Elliott (2012, p.386) also observed that there was a higher interest among the students when teaching about leadership in the form of experiences and stories.

Telling stories is one of the most elementary forms of sharing knowledge and experiences among human beings. As Chase (1995, p. 273) concludes from many scholars, “all forms of narrative share the fundamental interest in making sense of experience, the interest in constructing and communicating meaning”. She further explains, “a narrative may be oral or written and may be elicited or heard during fieldwork, an interview or a naturally occurring conversation. In any of these situations a narrative may be (a) a short topical story about a particular event and specific characters such as an encounter with a friend, boss or doctor; (b) an extended story about a significant aspect of one’s life such as schooling, work, marriage, divorce, childbirth, an illness, a trauma or participation in a war or social movement; or (c) a narrative of one’s entire life, from birth to the present” (2005, p. 652). Bruner, Gubrium, Holstein, Hinchman & Hinchman, Laslett, Polkinghorne (cited in Chase 2005, p. 656) further explain it as ‘a way of understanding one’s own and others’ actions, or organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting

and seeing consequences of actions events over time. On top of that, narratives are unique and expressive when it comes to emotions, thoughts and interpretations of situations and people (Chase 2005, p. 656-657).

Chase (1995, p. 274) emphasizes the importance of asking for life stories from the interviewees as a way in which the narrator and culture come together transmitting their experiences and meanings. Thomas and Znaniecki (cited in Chase 2005, p. 653) affirm that 'personal life records, as complete as possible, constitute the perfect type of sociological material'. A successful narrative interview passes the responsibility to the interviewee rather than the interviewer. That said, a good story needs a good question that is formed in relation to the everyday in experiences, thoughts and feelings. Articulating what makes the interviewee's life interesting in the beginning is important in the interview. What is also important is the relationship the interviewer forms with the interviewee in comfortable surroundings as it affects the quality of the stories (Chase 1995, p. 275; Chase 2005, p.657). The researcher needs to help the interviewee to tell the story in moments of silence, gaps, interruptions and possible contradiction (Chase 1995, p. 284)

The interviewees' narratives about themselves are connected to biographical, social, cultural and historical factors and so is the interviewer's interpretation of the narratives (Chase 2005, p. 657-658). I am interested in the personal life experiences, meanings and how they are communicated. My aim is to understand how or if they are connected to any discourses and hypotheses presented in this thesis and whether or not they 'draw on, resist, and/or transform' them (Chase 2005, p. 659). Furthermore the research will investigate how cultural and social factors embodied in the stories shape and possibly constrain the narratives (Chase 1995, p.290). Because of the strong relation to the everyday experiences in the life stories and narratives of the interviewees this research aims to find nuances, transactions and details from them.

Our perceptions of feminine characteristics in women are culturally and historically set in social constructions. As the world changes, so do our perception of values, common meanings and constructions in the society we are living in. Therefore the

experiences and observations of the interviewees are attached to time, place and culture in the narratives. Interestingly enough, personal narratives and life stories were used as research methods in academic feminism on the second wave of the women's movement and this way changed the way public saw women's lives compared to men's lives (Chase 2005, p. 654).

The narrative method leaves room for surprises and unexpected results that can result in serendipity and new findings. It also prevents the researcher from driving the research towards the wanted direction and instead getting the perspective of the interviewee (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2007, no page number).

Below is the procedure how one should construct the narrative interview as suggested by Prue Chamberlayne (Chamberlayne's Podcast) and Martin Bauer (1996, p. 6-8):

Start off by explaining the interviewee why you are interested in her/his experience and why it is important.

**First Section – Main narration:** Start with an open question that invites different things with a wide time span. The topic should be experiential to the interviewee to ensure his/her interest and richness of the narration (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000, no page number). As a response the interviewee makes an uninterrupted, improvised narrative. It is important not to ask questions or interrupt the interviewee. Only help by encouraging them to tell the story, otherwise let the story unfold and stay in the background. Meanwhile the researcher should take notes and make a sequence of what the interviewee said and form the questions on the spot. When the main narration ends, the interviewee should ask whether the interviewee would still like to say anything (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000, no page number). This section resulted in four stories of the four interviewees as presented later.

**Second Section – Questioning phase:** Once the interviewee comes to a natural ending with the story, the researcher asks for more details and particular examples on some of the important things the interviewees mentioned to gain additional material. This way the researcher can fill in the gaps. It is important to only base the questions

to what the interviewee told in his/her language and ask them in the told order as it might be of significance. It should not be a cross-examination pointing contradictions. The researcher should avoid 'Why' questions (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000, no page number).

**Third Section:** In this section it is time for researcher's own questions and small talk. The information coming out at this stage can be of much value when interpreting the narrative.

The above procedure on the narrative interview is ideal, however many times the nature of the interview becomes more blurred resulting in semi-structured interview (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000, no page number). In order to cover the variety of topics suggested by the diverse theories I assumed that additional themed questions would be necessary. I formulated them so they would follow the narratives and act as support for the interviews. Thus the second and the third section were in practice intermingled (see Eskola & Suoranta (cited in Ekonen 2007, p.38).

### **3.1.1 Transformational learning through narratives**

Stead & Elliott (2012, p. 386) concluded that when it comes to women's leadership learning, one of the best approaches is to learn from the experiences of female leaders. They noticed that when teaching about leadership and representing the experiences of female leaders to the students, they became more interested. Their interest was especially in female leader's narratives, in the words they used, in the way they described their thoughts and actions. Stead & Elliott (2012, p. 386) wanted to find the synergies, interconnections and details from their everyday experiences in relation to leadership and link them to success among their peers. Experiences in context from role models are therefore very useful when learning about leadership.

As Neuhauser (cited in Rossiter 2002, no page number) claims, "stories are effective as educational tools because they are believable, memorable and entertaining." The

familiar human experiences create an authentic source of knowledge that becomes meaningful to the listener when combined with their own source of knowledge. The particularity of the story, the vivid images and the small details evoke empathic response, which is of higher value to the listener than reading a stated fact from literature. Additionally stories enable a transformative learning process that can lead to personal growth and change in oneself. Stories can also act as motivators, pathfinders and sources of encouragement, especially for adult learners (Rossiter 2002, no page number).

### **3.2 Selecting the interviewees**

Because of my interest in women and feminine traits in leadership and due to many writings about gender inequality at workplaces, I chose to focus on interviewing only women for this thesis. Additionally I could argue that talking from woman to woman there is an unspoken mutual understanding and awareness of the issues discussed that can potentially create a more open platform for discussion (Ekonen 2007, p.41).

All of the interviewees I chose are women with long experience in the animation industry, which enables more extensive dataset for the narratives than interviewing younger ladies with less work experience (Ekonen 2007, p.38). Also their life matureness was favorable to the research results. Having some level of previous relationship with the interviewees brings better results with the narrative interview (Chase 1995, p. 275; Chase 2005, p.657), which worked for me because I had already worked with the women, some more closely than the others. I found each of the women to have a certain charisma, authenticity, quiet wisdom and tranquility that I was intrigued and fascinated by. Their experience, skills, moral maturity and emotional intelligence were the things I wanted to discuss in the interviews.

The interviewees in this thesis appear in their own first name.

### **3.3 The Research Questions**

My original interest was in the role of women and of feminine characteristics in managing animation productions. My research questions are:

- Do the female leaders use feminine characteristics to their advantage when managing the productions?
- If they do, how do they use them and in which context?
- Is there a connection to how women lead animation productions to how successful they are?

I also wanted to find out how they became who they are today as leaders in the world of animation.

### **3.4. Procedure of the research**

Prior to the interviews the interviewees were given information about the purpose of the study and the key topic I would interview them about. I also asked if they could write a story for me in addition to the interview. This was represented in an email at the very beginning of my thesis in March 2014. The response from the interviewees was very positive, finding my thesis interesting, hence they all agreed to be interviewed. However they were not very assured about the writing of their story that I suggested in the email. The women had no time in their busy schedules to write the story so I decided to skip the story writing part of the research.

Ekonen's (2007) work on the narrative research on female leader's career development worked as a good example for my research. However, our research questions were not alike. I also wanted to try to follow the ideal narrative interview procedure by asking one question for the main narration instead of breaking it down to themes from the start like Ekonen (2007) did in hers. I would only bring on the



themed questions in the third section. As I did not want the interview to have a questionnaire-like nature, I wanted the questions to take form in the situation. Therefore I asked more questions that rose from what the interviewees were telling me.

I chose the narrative interview because I wanted to leave room for surprises and new findings. I did not want to guide the interviewees with my questions and steer in a direction I wanted to go. I was interested in the interviewees' personal life and career experiences and the meanings behind them. As Stead & Elliott (2012, p. 386) concluded from women's leadership learning, the best way to learn is from a female leader's narratives, including the words they used, the way they described their thoughts and actions. My aim is that the readers of this thesis can also learn and get perspective from the ladies I interviewed about their experiences as a female leader in animation.

I had an opportunity to fly to Vancouver, Canada, to do my interviews with three of my interviewees face-to-face and took it. After reading about the narrative interview I concluded that it would be better to carry out the interviews face-to-face. The reason for the importance of face-to-face narrative interviews was to create a relaxed atmosphere. As stated by Berger & Luckmann (1966, p. 44) "It follows that relations with others in the face-to-face situation are highly flexible". Because the initiation phase strongly depends on the social skills of the researcher, it is important to make it as effortless as possible (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000, no page number). Not knowing the interviewees so well personally, the face-to-face situation enables an easier way to establish a good atmosphere and a connection with the interviewee. As Berger & Luckmann (1966, p. 43) write about the face-to-face experience "The most important experience of others takes place in the face-to-face situation, which is the prototypical case of social interaction. All other cases are derivatives of it". They continue explaining how it helps to relate to the other empathically and to feel close in a vivid presence. At the same time it is more difficult to sustain hypocrisy (Berger & Luckmann 1966, p. 43-44), which would ensure authentic responses from the interviewees.

I used my iPhone's voice recording application, which worked perfectly with all of the interviews. It enabled me to transfer the interviews to my laptop afterwards. All of my interviewees felt positive about me recording the interviews, especially after I told them that I would send their part for proof reading before publishing.

In Vancouver I interviewed two of my interviewees one-on-one at their workplaces. One of the interviews I did at my interviewee's home. The first interview I did with Tamara, who I had a closer relationship, enabling me to test the narrative interview and my questions for the first time without feeling too nervous about it. From there, it was easier for me to do my interviews with Catherine and Jennifer and feel more assured about what I was trying to accomplish.

With one of the interviewees, Hope, I was forced to do a video call interview through Skype because I couldn't travel to Copenhagen to meet her. Even though this was not ideal, it was still successful because of the relationship we had established by working closely together for couple of months in 2013.

My own experiences in the industry enabled me to better understand the narratives in terms of the language used by the interviewees. Knowing the vocabulary and knowing the type of people that work in the industry gave me an advantage to comprehend the data given by the interviewees.

Once I had finalized my thesis I sent the script to the women I interviewed to get their comments. Catherine was the only one from the four who sent an edited version back. I corrected some of her own quotes in order to clarify what she exactly meant. She also corrected some of the occurring spelling mistakes.

### **3.5. The narrative and the semi-structured interview questions**

I formulated my interview in the way suggested by Prue Chamberlayne (Chamberlayne's Podcast) and Martin Bauer (1996, p. 6-8). First, I explained why I

had chosen the interviewee and then I moved on to explain that my interest with the thesis is women's experiences in leadership/management of animation. The main question was formulated as follows with the aim of triggering the story-telling:

“I'm interested in your experience as a woman in animation production. Could you tell me about it in your own way, what has your journey been? I would like to hear also personal struggles, failures and successes. I won't interrupt you, you can just go on as long as you like. “

I kept the main question as large and open as possible in order to collect as much narrative information as possible (Ekonen 2007, p. 39). Instead of asking solely a career story and to keep the interview connected to my thesis topic, I incorporated the gender aspect in the question with personal life experiences in order to collect more of a personal life story rather than enumerated job experiences.

Once the interviewee was ready with her story, I would ask a few questions regarding some of the events she had mentioned in her story.

After that I would move to a semi-structured interview with themed questions that I had based on the theory I had studied. When analyzing the data from the interviews later, I could verify that the questions introduced vital issues.

As mentioned earlier, I wanted to avoid a mechanic, questionnaire-like interview, therefore my intention was to keep the interview open for additional questions that were not originally intended to be asked. Nonetheless all of the questions I had planned in advance were asked to study the hypothesis I had formulated.

Themes of the semi-structured questions:

**1. Female in Animation** – Has being a woman given you advantage or disadvantage in any particular moment in your career? What have been the challenges/barriers? In your opinion, are women especially suitable for producing animation?

A large number of my sources talk about the barriers and difficulties women have when transitioning into leadership. The sources also revealed advantages women can take because of their gender.

I was very interested in learning if they thought women were especially suitable leading in the animation industry. This was due to the academic articles I had read about women being especially suitable for creative industries and my own, personal observation during the work history at Rovio Entertainment Ltd.

**2. Obstacles:** Have there been difficult incidents in your personal life or work life? How have they influenced you as a person that has reflected to what kind of leader you are today?

A few times I came across findings about leaders becoming more humane and empathetic due to difficulties in their lives. The incidents had shaped them as people and therefore as leaders. I wanted to test especially this statement from George, Sims, McLean & Mayer (2007, p. 132); “While the life stories of authentic leaders cover the full spectrum of experiences – including the positive impact of parents, athletic coaches, teachers, and mentors – many leaders reported that their motivation came from a difficult experience in their lives”.

**3. Animation characteristics:** How would you characterize animation as a work environment? What kind of qualities are needed in leadership/management? Do the situations differ from production to production and do you modify your leadership accordingly?

Because of the special characteristics of each industry, I wanted my interviewees to describe the animation as work environment. From this I could evaluate the situation in which the interviewees operate and test the contingency theory.

A connecting question from the situation was the qualities needed in leading an animation production and whether or not the interviewees were to change their behavior from one production to another. Again this was to test the contingency

theory as well as see if the qualities that the women see necessary in leading animation production match the qualities needed to manage in creative industries.

**4. Key tasks in leading animation production:** What are the key tasks of leading an animation production?

In order to get the key tasks for the animation production leadership I wanted to ask the interviewees to list them, which would more specifically define the qualities needed in leading an animation production and if they had connections to feminine characteristics.

**5. Relationships** – What kind of relationships are important to you and how do they influence your leadership? (colleagues, mentors, family) What kind of relationships do you like to make at work?

These questions stemmed from relational leadership theory as well as from the reading of leadership learning. I wanted to know if they considered their leadership being very much in the daily interactions and relationships with people.

I was also interested knowing if my interviewees had mentors and how they connected and were influenced by people in their lives.

**6. Ethics** – Do you have ethical principles? If yes, how do they affect your leadership?

Many of the leadership theories listed the words ‘value’, ‘moral’ or ‘ethics’ as important driving factors in successful, sustainable and effective leadership. Also the leadership theories had a connection between the listed characteristics that were feminine as well as ethics. This topic being especially important to me I wanted to know if the interviewees felt strongly about something that motivated and guided their behavior and actions as a leader in a deeper level.

**7. Female Identity:** Has your female identity developed during the years and what are the things that have influenced it? (Society, culture, childhood?)

The questions of female identity came down to everything I had read about gender roles and how they affect our behavior, how we see ourselves and how others see us. Culture, upbringing and society are the things that shape us. It was therefore important to know if my interviewees were especially feminine or more neutral. What was going on at the time they were growing up and how were they encouraged or not encouraged to thrive in their careers by people around them.

**8. Feminine Characteristics** – Have you used any feminine characteristics in leadership?

With this question I wanted to know if the interviewees would consciously utilize their feminine characteristics as means of persuasion or manipulation when managing people and interacting with them. I was curious to see if this was something that the interviewees would become uncomfortable talking about or if they would find it amusing.

### **3.6. The analysis method**

Because of the open nature of narrative interview method I was encouraged by Smith (cited in Mattila 2014, p. 46) and give space for creativity in the analysis method. I decided to use thematic analysis, which is also rather undefined in nature and holds many different variations. The main idea behind the thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns/themes from the collected data. (Braun & Clarke 2006, p. 6).

Mainly I created themes around the pre-set themes I had for the interview questions. However, there were some themes that rose strongly unexpectedly and some that I had to let go of or combine with other pre-set themes due to the nature of the answers.

## **4. Leadership in animation – four stories**

### **4.1 Tamara**

#### **4.1.1 Background of the interview**

I had gotten to know Tamara while she was working at Rovio in the summer of 2013 as an Animation Production Consultant. During the time we worked together I developed a great amount of respect and admiration for her. I would go to her with a huge problem (in my opinion) and two calm sentences from her would put the issue in its place and give me reassurance to carry on. She had this amazing skill and influence to give the issues perspective just by looking at me with an assuring and at the same time amused gaze saying “you know...Come ‘on”. And I would think “Right. She’s so right.” and leave the room with my head back in the right place.

I contacted Tamara with the same email I sent each of the women I planned to interview. Her response was extremely encouraging by saying how fantastic the subject of my thesis was. She also added “*You should come to Vancouver for your interviews!*”, which planted a seed in me to look for a chance to go and do the interviews there. Eventually it worked out, I got to travel to Vancouver. It was also important to be able to interview the women face to face, as it was part of carrying out a narrative interview.

Tamara accommodated me during my stay in Vancouver. Therefore there were many chances for discussions about work life and life in general. One evening over dinner we were talking about women and work life, wondering why women many times doubt their skills and abilities. She told me how her friend had been offered a promotion to become a producer but had huge doubts because she didn’t think she was experienced or skilled enough We agreed that a man would likely have taken the job without hesitation and concluded that women always feel they need to have the required qualities and skills before accepting a new challenge whereas men jump right in with self confidence and don’t exactly care if they have what it takes or not.

During the conversation I also expressed a concern regarding my own experience and skills, which she accommodated by encouraging and sort of ‘mentoring’ me. Though it was interesting to have these conversations, I felt that we should not talk about anything related to women, animation and work because I wanted to save them all for the interview. I was afraid because I wasn’t recording, I might forget about what she told me.

We agreed to do the interview on Easter Sunday after a long walk in Stanley Park and lunch. We both had a long afternoon nap and when waking up I was nervous and hesitant to do the interview. Already over lunch I said to Tamara we could do the interview another day, but she insisted on having it that day because it would make me more confident to carry out the scheduled interview with Jennifer at Atomic the next day. And she was right. We started the interview at around six in the evening in a relaxed mode on the couch with tea and cookies. I was happy to have my first interview with Tamara since I felt most comfortable with her. That way I could test my interview and become more certain of the validity of the questions and the narrative method.

I pressed ‘play’ on my iPhone voice memo recorder after asking for permission to record and started off by explaining to her how I would conduct the interview. I also told her the reason why I had chosen her as my interviewee. I explained I would let her tell her story without interruptions until it came to its natural end, make notes and at the next stage possibly ask questions in regards to the story she was telling me. Also, I told her about the third phase of the interview, which would consist of themed, semi-structured questions based on the collected theory of the thesis.

While she started to tell her narrative I noticed it was impossible for me to make notes because I felt when the listener is looking down, it distracts the talker and gives a feeling they are not being listened to. Therefore in the very beginning I only concentrated on showing that I was listening by nodding and making “aha, uhm, really?” -sounds/comments to help her tell her story.



Even though I had aimed to construct my question as such that I could also get the gender aspect included in the narrative by emphasizing how it is to be a *woman* in animation, Tamara chose not focus on this aspect. She told me about her career history and included a lot of animation industry based information and learning without focusing on gender-specific struggles. She had told me on another occasion that when she was brought up she was told there were no differences between men and women and that women have equal rights and possibilities. She grew up in the United States during the women's movement. When it comes to her personal characteristics she is a tough lady and one can conclude from her career story that she is a risk taker, a strong and assertive personality, a problem-solver and a go-getter.

#### **4.1.2 Tamara's story**

Tamara is an American woman currently working as a senior producer at Sony Pictures Imageworks Canada. Her first Arts Management career was in theatre as a stage manager, which was already a dream come true for her. After theatre, she worked as a freelancer, organizing a wide range of special events. It was during those years that she met a woman who convinced her that animation was "right up her alley" and that she should apply to Disney.

At that time, Disney hired all kinds of managers from theatre because they thought those kinds of managers were better suited for animation than people from live action. In Tamara's opinion, the Disney classics were like musical theatre it was all about setting the scene up and holding many strings. As Tamara puts it, "The producers there in animation were from theatre, so you could talk to them in your language and they understood. You had common language even if it wasn't about animation, but it was about arts management and the way artists are managed and it was like theatre. Working with animators was like working with actors."

Tamara started her career in animation in the mid 90's and worked for a long period at The Walt Disney Company and for shorter periods at companies like The Weinstein Company and Rovio Entertainment. Her job roles included Director of

Production, Producer, Consulting Producer, Associate Producer, Line Producer and Senior Producer. Many of the roles she had were connected to problem solving and fixing as well as implementing new technologies and creating pipelines.

## **4.2 Hope**

### **4.2.1 Background of the interview**

I worked side by side with Hope at Rovio in the spring/summer of 2013. She was there as a consulting production manager. She turned out to be an invaluable adviser to me personally. She was very much liked by the whole crew and had a great sense of humor with a strong voice of reason. I approached Hope with my email requesting to interview her for my thesis. She said she would be honored to do so. I interviewed Hope after my trip to Vancouver, therefore she was the last one to be interviewed. She asked me to send her the questions in advance so that she could be prepared. As she already knew my main topic for the thesis, I decided to send her the main question of my narrative interview explaining that I'd love to hear her story and that I was especially interested in the gender aspect.

Our interview happened via Skype video call, which turned out to be troublesome at times when the connection was lost. Due of the bad connection we were forced to turn the video camera off. Even without seeing each other, the conversation felt comfortable as I knew Hope better than any of the interviewees and she was encouraging, easy-going and amazingly funny.

In the beginning of the interview she felt prepared to tell her story and had had time to think about what she wanted to highlight from her career. She started off by saying how she had evaluated her story, why some conflicts happened and how she wanted to tell her story. Perhaps a very self-aware statement before she started her story was as follows: *“The reason I’m here today and the reason I work the way I do has been through this history I’ve had up until this point. So I’ve been like collecting history*

*along the way of my observation of how things function and what functions and what doesn't function. So I would say the things that I do today have been through a lot of observation and a lot of trying things out in a practical sense”.*

Throughout her story you can see how she has proved herself with hard work, observation and passion. She wanted to thrive and make others thrive with her. The special feature in her leadership is the fun and the humor she wants to incorporate to every production. If she could see people inspired and everyone having a good time in productions, it was a successful project to her. Regardless of whether or not the end product itself was successful.

#### **4.2.2 Hope's story**

Hope was born Irish and is currently living and working in Denmark as a production manager/ line producer at Hydralab. She started her career as a painter in animation in the days when they still painted to cells. In those days animation was very male-orientated and women were mainly doing color and paint. They were not seen so much in production management or in animation itself. She got the opportunity to work in the United States early in her career, which for her was a dream come true. There, she gained an understanding of how animated feature films were produced. She also saw that women really had to prove themselves by working hard. After the years in the United States, she moved back to Ireland and entered a smaller company, where she was able to build her experience in an environment that provided more flexibility and variation of tasks than her previous experience in large organizations. After Ireland she moved to Denmark and took on her first supervising role in the cleanup department in an ambitious company, which was a huge learning curve for her and presented conflicts. Because she felt she wasn't a good leader and because of the conflicts she went back to drawing for many years. Even though she was happy doing what she did, she constantly had an inner conflict of feeling she wasn't good enough and was disappointed in how badly things were run in the production management side. After having her last child she decided that doing production

management was her calling and thought that would make her lose the insecurity she was feeling regarding her drawing skills. As a result, she started working in a Danish Film School with five directors on different projects and applied all the methods and things she had learned up until that period: more discussions, a lot more talking and coaching. She then moved on to use her approach as a line producer on a feature film. She describes it as follows:

*“For me there was a lot of things, trying to get the right chemistry is so important and trying to make sure people felt good about the positions they were in and I did my utmost to make sure everybody on that production had a good production and had a good time, it’s a whole year of your life and I feel if you put so much effort on the artistic side then you have to take care of the team that they also, in their personal side, have a really nice year and development. I tried to bring a lot of leadership skills in there, a lot of coaching, a lot of listening to people and letting them have a chance to air out so that they felt they owned a part of the production and that they actually were part of making this team to have a good production”.*

From there, her career in production management of animation took off and it has been successful ever since. Hope has been working in companies such as Nice Ninja, First Lady Film and AFilm Denmark as a production manager and line producer.

### **4.3. Jennifer**

#### **4.3.1 Background of the interview**

I met Jennifer as a business partner in autumn 2013. She is one of those women who make the whole room shine with her presence and genuine approach. I got in touch with her via email asking whether she would accept my wish to interview her. She answered yes and after a few weeks, I got to travel to Vancouver to interview her alongside Tamara and Catherine.

We met in her workplace at Atomic Cartoons and sat down in her office for the interview. She was the second one of my interviewees and I was glad I had one interview behind me (Tamara). I could feel more relaxed and confident about my research after having the first interview. Jennifer also made it comfortable for me with encouraging phrases such as “oh that’s a good question”.

Jennifer seemed very open throughout the interview speaking very freely about her experiences, herself as a leader and gender-sensitive issues. This could also be from the fact that I reassured her I would send the script for her approval before publishing. But I also think that is just the way she is: open, direct and hilarious with a nasty twist (which in this case is a very positive aspect). She would say the cruelest truth and right after laugh it off. She knew how to laugh at herself too, which is a sign of a good self-esteem and self-awareness.

#### **4.3.2 Jennifer’s story**

Jennifer is a Canadian living in Vancouver, Canada, working as Head of Production at a studio called Atomic Cartoons. Her background is in journalism and that is the field she worked in as a reporter after she graduated from university. After being sent off to do a couple of hard news stories, including interviewing mourners at a funeral, she felt uncomfortable getting into people’s personal business and decided the job wasn’t for her. So she applied to Vancouver Film School but kept working for Kids Network TV doing news stories. As she did a story in an animation studio about the first animated 3D TV series she found herself getting along with the people in the studio really well. One thing led to another and she was offered a job as an office production coordinator, which led to several promotions and roles in various companies such as Mainframe Entertainment, Rainmaker Entertainment and Atomic Cartoons. She loved being around creative people, she loved the process, the quirkiness of animation and the fact that at the end of the day, they were not saving whales but making cartoons. For her that meant seeing fewer egos because people were not taking themselves too seriously. Her strong philosophy of working for the crew and working hard has

played strongly throughout her whole career and she never forgets that there are things in life that are more important than work. In her opinion, that has worked out to be the biggest contributor to success in her career.

## **4.4 Catherine**

### **4.4.1 Background of the interview**

I met Catherine in the summer of 2013 when she was visiting our studio in Espoo. To me, she came across as a respectful, sophisticated and authentic. It seemed like there was a lot I could learn from her and hoped I might have the opportunity to work with her in the future. I got to know her a little bit better when I visited Vancouver in the autumn of 2013 during business trip. We had a dinner together one evening during which time I asked her many questions about her experiences as a female producer. It was a chance to glean some advice around shaping my career and determine the possibilities for the future. Eventually my wish to pick her brains came true in the form of this thesis.

Like all the other interviewees, Catherine also got an email from me asking her to be one of my interviewees. She agreed to it and expressed how interesting my subject was. Closer to the day of the interview, Catherine sent me an email asking what exactly I wanted to know so that she could be prepared. I didn't want to give out the questions as I was looking for an open conversation as opposed to one that was planned. I told her I was solely interested in her experiences as a woman in animation and what her journey had been so it didn't seem there was a need for preparation.

I arrived at Rovio Entertainment in downtown Vancouver, Canada, and met Catherine there. I was introduced to the crew working there so we all had a nice chat before Catherine and I proceeded to the meeting room to carry out the interview. As it had been several months since we had spoken, we continued catching up before the official interview started. The atmosphere was comfortable and relaxed. Catherine

agreed to be recorded as long as she could read the script from my thesis before it would be published.

I was in awe as Catherine shared the details of her lengthy and varied career. Her choices and experience took a lot of courage, determination and brains. She had worked her way up managing to overcome many challenging situations unique to women. Throughout her career she felt it was important to pave the road for hard working individuals with potential no matter the gender, however she was always looking to support and mentor talented women whenever possible. Considering her experience and how far she has come it is admirable to see how humble she is and how willing she is to help others achieve their potential as well. That is not so common. As Fletcher (2003, p. 9) suggests, people tend to forget about the help they received and reconstruct their behavior. As a result, her presence comes together in the form of dignity and integrity that is almost tangible.

#### **4.4.2 Catherine's story**

Catherine is a well-travelled Canadian lady living in Vancouver, Canada, currently running her own media business and working as an independent producer for Rovio Entertainment as well as various other clients. She fell into animation while travelling around the world after graduating from university. When she boiled down the key important aspects of her future career, she decided that it was critical she identify a profession that included the ability to be creative, one that took advantage of her organizational skills, was international, and most importantly, one that enabled her to work with great people. While she wasn't aware of it initially, animation it turned out was the perfect industry and fit for her. One day while living in Japan, she saw a job opening at an animation studio that Disney Animation, based in LA, had recently purchased as a way to build out their animated television series pipeline in Asia. She applied for the job and without understanding anything about the role (the entire interview took place in Japanese) she jumped at the opportunity. She started the job with a bare minimum understanding of the Japanese language and no training in the

animation industry whatsoever. What she quickly learned was that, while a female manager hired her, the studio was a very male orientated environment. At the time, women were expected to bring coffee, pour tea and clean ashtrays. None of the male managers had any idea therefore what to do with this foreign woman who explained as respectfully in broken Japanese that this was not what she understood the role to be. After several discussions about the best way to use her the Japanese production team took her under their wings as they realized they were having many difficulties communicating with their new owners out of the US and needed all of the help they could get. Together they determined a plan to ensure her success. She would spend half a day studying Japanese at school for four months. The rest of the time she would spend time in the various departments learning about the animation process from their point of view. At the end of the four months, she would then be in a position to help them better communicate and work with the US studio. This job established her as a moderator, facilitator and a mediator in many more roles to come.

Catherine stayed in Japan for couple of years and then moved back to Canada where she managed to receive a government grant that enabled her to study how to develop the animation industry in Western Canada as she recognized an industry in its infancy with significant potential. After completing the study, she was tracked down to work on a troubled movie for Hanna-Barbera in Taiwan. Having begun to build a reputation of that of a troubleshooter, they were looking for someone to come in and complete a movie that was more than a year behind schedule. Drawing on her Asian experience and cultural understanding, she opened up the communication channels between the Chinese studio handling the production and the American creative team responsible for driving the project. Partnering with all sides, she set up systems and figured out where all the material was at in the process in order to deliver the movie done in record time.

Her dream was to work in LA, which is where she ended up after Taiwan as Hanna-Barbera offered her a new role at the studio to oversee their international production and studios. As the company had new owners and a different vision for the studio, much of her job was focused on helping management to shift the philosophy of the companies in Asia and America from that of a factory style of producing to one that



was much more creatively oriented and based. It was a big undertaking as she re-worked the production management structure and teams, the production workflow domestic and international, and partnered with the development team to identify new talent and projects that could think outside the traditional box. There were many areas of the business to get into and it taught her a tremendous amount about how to manage and lead teams of people during a time a significant change while keeping them inspired and invested.

Over the years she continued to work with the leading companies such as HBO, Fox Feature Animation, Lucasfilm Animation, Warner Brother's animation, MTV, DisneyToons, Rainmaker Entertainment in addition to running her own consulting company. Her titles included Producer, Executive Producer, Senior Vice President of Production, President/Executive Producer, Manager Domestic and International Production, Film Producer. She did great amounts of developing, innovating, organizing, structuring, mediating and problem solving. Her career has been quite extraordinary, but you can tell it has required a lot of hard work, leaps of faith and risk taking. But that was typical for her, sometimes holding two to three demanding roles simultaneously; she loved to juggle many challenges. While on maternity leave for example she decided to write a book about animation production. Every now and then she would take a year off to be with her children and have a break from intense working periods to consult and recharge. She has an extremely good eye for recognizing opportunities and a good network with mentors and other connections. As Catherine puts it, *"I'm always looking for a challenge and ways to improve how I and those around me work. It is hard for me to sit back when I know something could be better"*.

#### **4.5. Comparing the stories**

The way that I constructed my main question was aimed to trigger and inspire the interviewees to tell me a narrative of how it is to be a woman in animation. I incorporated my wish to hear their journey, personal struggles, failures and victories.

Because this thesis is about the business of animation, I advised them to tell me about their careers but still tried to keep the question as open as possible to enable a more extensive amount of material to work with (Ekonen 2007, p. 39).

A common feature in all of the narratives was that they were rather eager to teach and share their knowledge based on their journey working in animation.

Hope told me about how she got into animation, especially what kind of things she learned from every company she had worked for. What really stood out from her story was that she tried to incorporate the gender issue throughout her story as well as what are the things she has experienced that in her opinion ultimately can develop female leaders to become better leaders. Hope was also very open about her own shortcomings when she was younger.

Catherine's narrative was quite detailed in explaining what exactly she did in every company. She then incorporated her learning after each experience and what kind of skills she added to her repertoire. Catherine told a success story of a woman who truly made her way up due to her extremely hard work ethic. It was notable how many opportunities she had taken without having the experience, but was fearless about the challenge. What also came up many times were the connections and mentors she has had throughout her career that have been of big importance to her.

Jennifer was the only one from the four interviewees who kept her work history short and focused on her work philosophy and what she thinks are the most important things in leadership. A deep care for people and making sure they can flourish came strongly through the narrative. She didn't incorporate the gender issue to her narrative at all nor did she tell anything about her personal life. Only after I got more into the themed questions incorporating the female aspect clearly to the question was I able to receive rich narration on the topic.

Tamara's narrative was an outline on how she got into the industry and what she has done throughout the years. A strong focus was on explaining the nature of feature animation. She left out gender and personal life related factors from her narrative. I

had to try and dig a little deeper, using the themed supporting questions to help. It seemed that she liked to keep work detached from gender issues and personal life.

## 5. Leadership in animation – what does it encompass?

After writing out the stories I analyzed the interview material to discern what would be the principal themes rising from the material. Because of the supporting theme-questions of the narrative interview a lot of the themes were pre-set. Combining the pre-set themes and the themes that arose from analyzing the interviews, the focal themes can be formulated as follows:

1. Characteristics of animation industry
2. What does it take to lead animation productions?
3. The manifestation of ego in animation
4. Perception of female characteristics and experiences of female advantage and disadvantages in leading animation productions
5. Role of ethics in leadership
6. Private life and its influence on leadership
7. Acquiring leadership skills

### 5.1 Characteristics of animation industry

This theme was pre-set in the interview questions and a lot of the answers came when explicitly being asked about the characteristics of the industry. However I would pick things here and there from the narratives and also reflect on my own experience to highlight some of the things mentioned by the interviewees.

All of the interviewees recognized animation as rather special under the umbrella of creative industries. According to the interviews animation builds itself from creative, quirky people with a passion for animation, the special visual content they are creating and the fun and family-like company culture. Jennifer characterizes animation as “*creative*” and “*fun*” and sees people “*working hard*”. Compared to live action she thinks there is much less ego “*you know if you go to the live action*

*environment, it's very, people take themselves too seriously, which always kind of cracks me up". She adds that in the end of the day they are "making cartoons, not saving the whales".*

When asked about the work environment of animation three of the interviewees focused on explaining the characteristics of the people. Commonly used terms were "quirkiness", "nerdiness" and "creativity". Some also mentioned the challenge in communication with the artists. Also the "lack of ego" was mentioned a couple of times by three of the interviewees:

*"People that come into animation, I think you need to be very passionate about animation. I don't think you can just decide that you want to be a person working in animation, it's because this world is...you know, it's a very special type of person that falls into these areas. They all have a slight knottiness to them, slight stubbornness to them, they also have a slight nerdiness to them, but they are all creative people who have passion about what they are doing." – Hope*

*"This is again a broad generalization but I think animation tends to draw the nerds. You get a lot of people who are very quirky but I like that...I loved it, I loved the process, I loved being around creative people, I liked the quirkiness of animation and I liked the lack of ego of animation that I didn't see in other businesses." – Jennifer*

*" It's very visual. I find that communication is very hard with artists. It's so visual that communication sometimes... they can't speak and they can't tell you what's going on sometimes. So you have to be observant and then ask questions to bring out what's going on. Because they are so visual, they just don't have good communication skills." – Tamara*

Almost all of them mentioned the family-like feeling or as Jennifer called it, the "great sense of comradely" that can be found in animation. This is likely due to long production time and close working quarters. Tamara used the term "family-oriented" referring to the community that evolves around the productions: "Because it takes so long. I'm just talking about Feature. Because of that, the working environment has to

*be more family oriented, it really does. It needs to be: you're a family and you're in this together and you're gonna be with each other for a long time".*

Also Hope explicitly mentioned the family-like feel that makes animation unique, fun and interesting compared to other workplaces: *"It seems like one nice little family with all sorts of brother and sister conflicts and all that that goes in. There's a wonderful bubble of family that I don't see happening in other workplaces...For me, I don't need to earn loads of money...this nice little family, you spend so much time and hours working with them. It's really difficult to find it other places. I love this atmosphere and this community and it suits me and my personality".*

Catherine described the characteristics of animation, explaining the multitude of the layers and the multi-threaded complexity of it as follows: *"Animation is controlled chaos. You have to be extremely organized, you have very specific deadlines, you have all these different elements that you're producing typically all over the world".* Both Tamara and Catherine expressed the slowness of animation production. Catherine figuratively illustrated it as follows: *"I'm kind of imagining it sort of slow and wavy, have your dips where things aren't going that well and your peaks where it is. From the outside it appears to move very slowly. If you compare it to the waves in the ocean, they look like they're going slowly, but there's all these molecules moving through really really quickly all interconnected".*

## **5.2 What does it take to lead animation productions?**

The data under this theme was constructed from various different pieces of the interviews. Even though the theme was more or less pre-set, there were many occasions during the interviews when the interviewees would "educate" me on the good qualities of a leader in animation productions.

Because of the complex and "chaos"-like nature of animation and the various stakeholders involved, there is a need to be very "flexible" and "malleable" and

almost like a “*chameleon*” as Catherine says it. In order to “*keep moving forward*” and do “*the best work possible*” you have to be “*super organized*” but at the same time “*have a little bit of flexibility*” and “*be comfortable with chaos*” to enable the creative work of the artists to flourish.

Because it is so chaotic and many things are “*spinning in your head*”, Catherine says one “*needs to understand what is the priority, what to address first, what to let go, how you keep everyone focused and forward thinking and engaged and inspired*”. According to Catherine this requires a strong “*sense of yourself*” in order to remain clear and focused. Similarly, Tamara says being “*self-aware*” and “*stepping back*” and seeing “*the whole*”, “*figuring out what’s going on*” will help to solve a problem. Problem solving was also mentioned by Hope as one of the key qualities in managing animation productions. Tamara reminds how “*taking rest*” and “*taking care of yourself*” are important factors helping one to become more “*self-aware*”.

Some of the interviewees mention how every production is different from each other, requiring a different kind of leadership. Hope also describes the need to be “*a psychiatrist, a mother, a sister*” depending on the situation and the context.

Being able to budget and schedule the productions are important qualities to have as many of the interviewees said. Tamara described herself as very “*task*”- and “*schedule-oriented*” and wants to “*get the job done*”. However according to Jennifer, having a “*great attitude*” is the one that continues to open doors. By a great attitude she means the “*willingness to support your crew*”, “*do whatever is necessary on your behalf to create a successful production*” and to “*operate without ego towards the success of the team as a whole*”. All other interviewees also mentioned operating without ego as one of the necessary qualities in leading animation productions. As for other qualities, Hope mentioned the need for being “*stubborn*” but also “*open to ideas*”.

For Catherine to be able to understand the “*bigger picture*”, the “*end goal*” and being able to look “*ahead*” and “*anticipate pitfalls*” are important factors as a leader in animation. For her the challenge is to be “*present*” at the same time, understand and

be empathetic around “*where everybody’s at*” and “*where they’re coming from*” so that she can help them “*where they need to be*”.

Tamara also mentions the importance of coming across as “*human*”, not as someone who makes choices “*arbitrarily*”. In her opinion the people need to know “*that you looked at if from all angles and it has to happen*” and “*where people don’t think that decisions are made without them being heard*”. Relating to Tamara’s comments Hope also mentioned listening as an important quality when managing people.

Being “*human*” and listening to people connects to the next quality of being able to get people to trust oneself. It can be considered as a quality that stems from ethical principles the interviewees called with terms such as “*honesty*”, “*fairness*”, “*integrity*” and “*equitability*”.

Hope, Tamara and Jennifer saw creating a good environment as an essential quality in animation production. “*Positivity*” and “*humor*” were seen as something “*really good*” when creating an atmosphere. Hope explains how she was always “*a bit nutty and silly*” and Tamara similarly used the words “*up and laughing*”. For them it was about creating the “*relaxed*” and “*creative*” atmosphere where everyone is involved and treated as “*film makers*” as Tamara called them as well as “*respected*” like Hope similarly signifies.

Tamara, Jennifer and Catherine mentioned the terms of being “*calm*” and “*zen-like*” as good qualities to have and develop in animation leadership. Tamara said it’s a way for being happier and a “*great strategy to produce a movie*” because the opposite attitude can lead to the crew seeing you in “*despair*” and “*they can feel it*” like Jennifer said. Not to “*take it personal*” and “*working for the greater good*” was mentioned more than once by almost all of the interviewees.

Empathy rose many times in all of the interviews as a very important quality to possess when managing people in animation. Jennifer tries to “*see their position*” and similarly Catherine tries to get “*360 perspective*” to overcome challenges in



situations. Some of the interviewees mentioned empathy as a quality that made them better leaders.

### **5.3 The manifestation of ego in animation**

This theme was not planned to be one of the themes in this research. However, it was something that all of the interviewees would continuously mention and therefore it arose as one of the main themes that gained a lot of attention.

Ego was a very visible concept in the narratives on many occasions. The interviewees mention ego as a factor they have tried to avoid in their careers by first of all choosing to work in animation where less ego is seen as well as moving away from companies where it existed more. In the interviews, the meaning of ego as a concept is not self-explanatory but concepts such as interest in personal success, taking oneself too seriously and a bad attitude can be interpreted from them. In context ego is seen as a negative trait of behavior that makes working with such persons highly demanding and unpleasant that can influence negatively the whole production. Despite the low amount of ego in the animation industry as some of the interviewees claim, the narratives from the interviewees suggest its existence several times. For example Jennifer mentioned in her interview *“there’s always those people in companies. It’s very discouraging. There’s idiots who take themselves too seriously and have big egos. You can never change them, so how do you work around them”*. In many examples the big egos were seen among men, however there were also a couple of cases in which the person having a big ego was a woman. When Tamara was talking about how great her current crew is, she mentioned how *“there’s no one who’s got ego”*.

As an addition the interviewees mentioned ego being something they have to put aside or *“operate without”* as Jennifer puts it. Operating without ego comes across as working for the crews, working for the greater good and being a *giver*, which can be explained as a person selflessly working for others’ well being. Hope’s experience is

that women can have a very positive input on productions because *“they don’t bring their egos to it”*. She doesn’t deny women having an ego, but sees women wanting to *“find a solution to get there in the end”* and being *“good at compromising”*. Catherine also says the same thing as follows: *“You have to put your ego on the shelf, and do your best to be zen-like as possible and not take anything personal and say what is best for the greater good. My role is to support that and achieve that type of environment. It’s not about me, it’s about the greater good. And the minute your ego gets involved...you can get your moments of conflicts with people in situations, but if I can just step back, am much more able to lead and find a way forward”*.

In order to manage the egos all of the interviewees mentioned not to take things personal. Operating without ego and not taking things personal seemed to be connected aiming for the same goal, working for the greater good. Tamara explained that was something you learn only after experience and time and saying: *“if you’re always up with a good cheer, you don’t go down to their level. If they are nasty to you, you just overlook it. It’s about not taking it personal”*. Hope mentioned the same thing recognizing the natural position where it is hard to find the *“balance when it’s personal and not personal”* advising *“you have to repeat to yourself it’s not personal, it’s production related.”*

For Jennifer, being able to avoid taking things personal came through as an effort to find empathy towards the person and *“feel sorry for them”*. Being able to do that, she had to take her *“ego out of it”* and *“try to see their position, why are they like that”*. Usually she could find the reason being *“a dramatic childhood event that has shaped them into the person they are”*. This helps *“not to judge them as much and find a good way to work with them”*. She would also explain how many times the reason behind being difficult is due to insecurity, which she manages by *“feeding into their ego a little bit...so that they feel better about themselves and then it’s easier for me to work with them.”*

You could see that the way the interviewees wanted to achieve a good production then and now had a lot to do with people and the importance of casting. Tamara would describe it as a *“feeling you want with everybody in a room”*. Their goal is to

create an environment in the productions with fewer problems and negativity, fewer egos. Hope talked about getting the right chemistry between people and how that shapes the production *“It’s an evaluation. That’s what I think is very interesting that productions are so organic. You can put up a template and it will not work to that template because there’s too many chemistries involved in it”*. She continues, explaining how *“too many egos can create natural conflicts”* and how it *“just takes one, two, three bad positions and you’re gonna use so much time as a production person making sure that they are alright and all the issues they have you will be solving. And it will take the focus away from the production”*. Catherine also supported Hope’s view by saying: *“It’s funny, the right key people understand the philosophy, have positive energy and understand what you’re trying to do as opposed to fight you on it”*.

#### **5.4 Perception of female characteristics and experiences of female advantage and disadvantages in leading animation productions**

When constructing this theme I decided to bring together the feminine characteristics and the interviewees’ viewpoints and experiences of being a woman in a leading role in production. To this theme I also included the feminine characteristics they saw as possible disadvantages to overcome.

When asked whether or not the interviewees had used their feminine characteristics to their advantage when managing people in productions, all of the interviewees first connected the “feminine characteristics” to a woman’s sexual appeal or to a “girly” stereotype. Hope exclaimed, *“I wish, I don’t have the body to do it!”* and Tamara never saw herself as a *“sweet little girl”*. That was the first reaction, however they all moved on quickly to explain exactly what using their feminine characteristics to their advantage meant for them. Hope and Jennifer moved on to explain other feminine characteristics connected to *“nurturing”*, *“feeding”* and *“complementing”* people’s ego. In fact, feeding into the person’s ego was mentioned by all of the interviewees a few times at different parts of the interviews. Jennifer would call it as a *“manipulative*

*female quality*”, even “*powers of persuasion*” and Hope as “*feminine tactic*”. These words could easily be interpreted as crafty and in some sense slightly crooked, however they both stressed they would never do it for their own benefit, but to build up the person’s self-confidence or for the greater good.

An interesting addition was Jennifer’s tale about how she had always seen her attractiveness as something of a disturbance when doing business. Society’s perception of beauty and the judgments that would come from it were a downside. According to her she wasn’t taken seriously and was struggling to manage this “*powerful asset*”, her attractiveness. But even in those cases she would go back to her integrity, treating people well and just hoping everything would fall into place. Aging and having kids was something that she considered a “*relief*”, enabling her to focus on what she valued.

The interviewees’ ability to feel empathy came up many times during the interviews and it was connected to terms such as “*nurturing*” and “*caring*” by all of the interviewees. Many of the studies imply those being the feminine characteristics. Empathy enables the interviewees to “*see their (the people’s) position*” as Jennifer put it and to “*understand where they’re coming from*” as Catherine said. She continued saying how “*intuitive senses, empathy and sensitivities*” helped her to “*coach people to overcome a challenge*” as well as “*being able to get people talk to me and share what they wouldn’t share with somebody (else)*”. For her, it was the key in solving issues, “*whether it’s a creatively or production wise, operation wise, whatever it is*”. Tamara would also see empathy as a feminine characteristics, which she “*tried to be more*” after moving to animation from theatre and organizing big events, as she said she used to come across as “*a little bit too hard-ass than was good*”.

“*Empathy*”, “*nurturing*” and “*caring*” came up even more explicitly when the interviewees were asked about whether or not women were better suited in leading animation productions. In the context of working with animators, Tamara would say it was an “*advantage when you’re their mum or something*” because “*they like a lighter touch*”. Also Jennifer talked about a “*nurturing touch*” that in her opinion works “*a*

*lot for the team out there*". In contrast Catherine shun away from using the word "motherly" as she didn't "like to be anybody's mother" because she wanted to approach her team as "adults and professionals". Instead she liked using the term "womanly traits" such as "intuitive senses", "empathy" and "sensitivities". Like Tamara, Hope also mentioned the term "mother-nature" as the "caring part of it" and continued explaining, "it's not all about numbers and figures, there's also personal, are people thriving, are people succeeding", which she wasn't sure if the male counterparts had "insight of".

The urge to see people thriving was not only mentioned by Hope but also other interviewees. It seemed to be almost their personal mission and as Catherine said, "the best part of my career". She would "really enjoy watching people grow, mentoring people and giving opportunities" and "pave the road for women that typically hasn't been available for them". She saw "a lot of potential"..."especially in a lot of women" because she saw "how hard they work" but wouldn't explicitly do it for women but also for men. Jennifer shared exactly the same view by saying, "I think that's been my success is that I do really care about the individual and by being able to talk to them and hear them and understand where they want to go. Then when I'm formulating crews and what not I try to create opportunities for people".

The cons of caring about the people and the work was seen as being too "emotionally attached" or as "stuck on it", which would disable the interviewees from "having perspective" and "being able to step back to see the big picture". That was something that in their opinion would potentially make their leadership weaker. As Catherine stated, "when you're emotionally caught up, you can't do your job as well as a leader". Similarly Jennifer mentioned, "I think it's not getting emotional...you have to stay calm, and not take yourself too seriously, and stay positive and encouraging...if you let someone take that away then you're not as effective leader". Being too emotionally attached could result in Catherine's case to get "burned out and stressed out" because she was so "passionate" about what she did and she "cared about everybody", searching for the "best possible situation".

Dealing emotionally with difficult situations at work became easier for Catherine after having children, *“it grounded me so I could almost distance myself a little bit to be a better leader because I wasn’t so emotionally connected to whatever was going on, I could actually step back and see it for what it was and be able to help people through”*. Another way for Catherine to avoid getting too emotionally attached was through consulting, which was also mentioned by Tamara, *“You cannot get too tied into it. It’s not your project. As a consultant the role is to support the stakeholders”*. She continued explaining how *“experience”* and being *“self-aware”* would enable her to *“step back”*.

The other commonly mentioned feature about why women would be better-suited managing animation productions was their ability to communicate. In Tamara’s opinion it was one of the key tasks in animation while Catherine thought it was a *“female strength”* and explained the importance of communication, *“it’s what people need, they need to know what’s going on, they need to feel part of the vision. It is not possible to over-communicate”*. When Hope started doing production management for the first time she brought the methods of *“a lot more talking”* and *“a lot more discussions”* and found it as one of the key factors leading to a successful production. In Jennifer’s opinion *“women’s communication abilities”*, *“natural affinity for people”* and *“ability to drop”* and *“chat”* to people are *“really positive”* things in production. Jennifer shared the same insight that Tamara also mentioned earlier of that the artists can be *“very much in their box”* and *“communication”* can be *“very hard”* with the artists because they are so *“visual”*. Therefore in Jennifer’s opinion *“female tendency of communicating better and communicate more pulls people out”* as well as Tamara’s habit to *“observe”* and *“ask a lot of questions”* to *“bring out what’s going on”* are *“great for management of animation”*.

Multi-tasking is traditionally believed to be a strength that women possess more commonly than men. Despite the easiness of stereotyping this womanly trait in the rapidly spinning and multilayered nature of animation production only Tamara highlighted multitasking as something women tend to manage better:

*“I think because they can multi-task and in production there’s a lot of tasks going on, there’s a lot of plates spinning all at one time and I think women are very good at keeping plates going. They don’t get sucked into one thing. Women are able to step out and assess a little bit easier than men. Men just get focused on THAT. Women are able to step back and just say what’s really going on here. And able to say, uuuh that plate is starting to fall, I better go and do a little bit more work on that but I know that all these other plates are going on the same time.”*

Tamara saw women creating a more “smooth” production whereas she saw male producers wanting to put “those kind of people in the movie” who “throw sticks on the spokes” and “mess it up”. As Tamara and Hope were explaining the importance of good work environments for productions, they would mention the right balance between men and women. Tamara explained how in animation one could many times see the core leadership shared between the female producer and the male director, where “the leadership is not one or the other”. Having both genders represented would bring a mix of both feminine and masculine characteristics, which has also been recommended by studies. Interestingly, Hope would talk about how too many males in a production and too many females in a production could become problematic. “In that one production it was so male-dominated. Male director, male producer, male line producer. I do not know what happened, they all were protecting their own territories”. She would continue explaining, “if you have too many egos, that will create natural conflicts” reminding that “not all guys are like that”. In turn she saw having too many women as having “a little too many chickens in the coop court” that can result in conflicts.

Being nice and soft in situations when caring too much about the people and their feelings were seen as the flipside of having the empathy and nurturing. In these cases the interviewees wished they could have “acted more as men” by being “tougher” and “not to care about feelings too much”. However, finding that right balance of not coming across as too assertive was a challenge for the interviewees and has been indicated by many studies too (Loganathan & Krishnan 2010, p. 55 & Kumra and Vinnicombe cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 380). Three of the interviewees talked about a more assertive approach they had in the earlier days of their career. Tamara

was seen as the “*hard ass*” and Hope explained how she was seen as the “*toughie*” and a “*production witch*”. They both didn’t want to be perceived like that by their subordinates and Hope didn’t see any good results coming out of it, only “*dissatisfaction*”. As Hope mentioned, being tough is also “*part of the job*”, but in her opinion there are different ways of being tough without being perceived as “*bitchy*”. Catherine would mention she learned over the years to be “*straightforward and honest*” in a way that “*wasn’t hurtful*”, but rather “*sensitive*” and “*thoughtful*”. Jennifer would find a way to be “*direct*” and “*pick*” her “*moments*” in order for not to be interpreted as “*assertive*” or “*bitchy*” and thought that was the one thing men don’t “*struggle with*”. Jennifer and Catherine would both mention how they would “*stay smart*”, “*earn respect*” and “*work hard*” in order to gain success in their careers in animation as women. Additionally Catherine mentioned that because she had to earn the respect as a woman by working hard and doing a good job. It “*shaped*” her not to be interested in “*the politics*” and “*playing all the games behind the scenes*”.

As a last interesting outcome when comparing women with men in animation production, Tamara found women more “*realistic*” and “*honest*” when in turn “*men are able to cover their mistakes much easier*” by “*turning things around*” and “*spinning*” them into “*positive*”.

## **5.5 Role of ethics in leadership**

This theme was pre-set in advance, however it could have almost been left out as a separate question due to the magnitude of how strongly values and ethics came through in the narratives.

When the interviewees were asked about ethical principles, they all had rather strong view on ethics by basing their leadership on foundation of values. In fact, ethics played a very visible role throughout the interviews before they were explicitly asked about as one of the last supporting theme questions.



Not only had the interviewees based their behavior on a value-system, but they had also tried to incorporate values in the studio and the production crew they had worked with. A common value for the North-American interviewees (Tamara, Catherine and Jennifer) was “*honesty*” or being “*truthful*”, which they practiced themselves and expected from others. Hope, being a European, took honesty as a given thing. Therefore one could interpret that as a cultural factor or possibly as a difference in the scale of the production; “*Hollywood-money making machine versus European low-budget productions*” as Hope put it. Jennifer saw “*honesty*” leading to “*trust*”. Catherine shared a similar view by saying she is “*highly ethical*” and being “*fair*”, “*honest*” and “*equitable*” is the “*foundation*” for being a “*strong leader*”. In order for her to be able to “*look in the mirror every morning*” and “*feel really good*” about who she is was to keep her “*integrity intact*” and feeling it “*was the right thing to do*” even though the situations and people she “*stood up for*” hadn’t always “*benefited*” her “*personally*”. In fact some of those situations would sometimes “*bite*” her.

When learning and experiencing different styles of leadership Jennifer said respect and coming back to values would work for her, “*I figured if I could mirror good value systems, promote innovation, promote trust and respect at the workplace then everything else would fall in its place*”. Similarly Hope would mention that “*valuing*” and “*respecting*” everyone in the production are the ways in which she likes to operate.

## **5.6 Private life and its influence on leadership**

The theme of private life and its affect on leadership was pre-set. It became even more apparent when listening to the narratives and seeing the interviewees as wholesome people. The leaders they are today come from the interconnection of their private life as well as their experiences throughout the history of their work life.

I could recognize turning points or major events in the interviewees’ private lives working as transformative factors in, for example, increasing their ability to feel

empathy, being less emotionally attached with work and gaining perspective in work and life balance. They saw the transformative factors in private life enabling them to become better leaders. In this research the major events and turnings points would include having children, death of someone close to them, being a victim of bullying and maturing with age. Maturing might be a questionable matter in this context of major events or turning points in life, however it can be seen as transformational factor in an individual's life that comes with age.

Three of the interviewees saw having children as a “*changing*” factor in their lives as well as in their behavior as leaders. Two of the interviewees explained how they were able to get “*perspective*” and “*self-awareness*”. In Jennifer's case children would act as her “*guiding principle*” and they would always be prioritized over work, which made her care less about work and not get “*too emotionally attached*” to it. Catherine's answer echoed this saying that the “*real world situations*”, such as her child being sick, would “*ground*” her. She explained it as follows “*Before I had my children, I could get very caught up and worried about everybody or the drama of a situation at work. I would lose sleep and take to heart or I worry about things far too much. I probably didn't need to have so much weight put up on them. It all changed once I got perspective*”. Having children enabled her to “*distance*” herself and not be so “*emotionally connected*”, which in her opinion made her a “*better leader*”. Hope would explain a huge, maturing transformation in her approach as a leader with an “*enhanced ability*” to “*empathize*” with people at work. Before she had kids it was “*all about work, work, producing work*” and after kids it was all about “*the persons and their success to produce the work*”. All of a sudden she was “*able to accept people's differences*” and be “*able to see*” and “*nurture*” their strengths. She would also read a lot of educational books on how to bring children up, saw how kids and parents interact and how one can nurture their success and applied all of the things she learned into her management skills.

Tamara and Hope saw their leadership getting better with age and becoming “*more mature*”. Tamara saw maturing as being more “*comfortable*” within her and not “*needing to be anything else*”. A big changing factor for Tamara was a personal loss she had a few years ago, which “*mellowed*” her and “*added*” to her “*empathy*”. She

described her loss as follows, *“That personal journey that I took, it was so hard. Nothing, making a movie is nothing compared to that.”*

When I asked about a difficult incident in Jennifer’s life that had affected her way of being a leader she would start telling me how she was bullied as a youngster. She was picked on for being a nerd, being in a gifted class, for being so tall and she would simply always stand out as *“different”*. Today she sees it as a moment in her life, which gave her the ability to *“feel great deal of empathy towards people”* who are *“unfairly being judged”* by their *“awkwardness”*, *“nerdiness”* or by just *“being different”* because she *“knew how it felt”*. Because animation in her opinion tends to draw similar *“quirky”* people, she saw it as a *“comfort zone”* for herself.

## **5.7 Acquiring leadership skills**

Asking the interviewees about how they learned about leadership was not in my pre-set themed questions. However asking about the importance of relationships and especially ‘mentors’ gave me an insight I wanted to combine with the learning aspect, which would rise every now and then while carrying out the interviews.

One of the main ways for the interviewees to learn about leadership was from seeing bad and good examples of leadership and learning from their own mistakes. Through the experiences and taking *“bits and bobs”* as Jennifer said, they tailored their own best way to practice leadership. Hope would tell how lucky she had been to work with *“such talented people”* that she has been *“influenced by”*. By *“observing”* she could see what they did right as well as what didn’t work and take the she could use into her leadership. Tamara mentioned the same thing saying, *“I think I gather from everyone I’ve worked with. I like to be like Pam in this way and David like this way.”* Hope explained her journey to leadership as follows;

*“I wouldn’t be the person today if I hadn’t done all those things. Because then you can go in and actually use that for some things, it’s all part of the journey, it’s a*

*matter of what you choose to do with that information. I know I want to take this from this experience and that from that experience. That is the conscious decision I took at one point when I understood I don't want to be like that, I don't want to be seen like that, there's no goodness coming out from that."*

An important aspect for all of the interviewees was to have a person to discuss their leadership with and to give advice on their career moves and leadership in general. They also saw those connections being something that would create opportunities for them. These persons were mentors, colleagues or husbands.

Jennifer saw a mentor being someone who you want to become like. Therefore she denied having mentors. She would only "*glean on*" what she saw working and let go what she didn't see working. In turn Catherine saw having mentors as truly "*valuable*". She would explain as follows, "*To be able to have that person in your life that you can just bounce a questions off from, is objective, has knowledge and experience behind them, it's a wonderful gift.*" Mentors in her life saw her potential and broke barriers, which led to the creation of opportunities. In her case there had been both female and male mentors. Tamara would see "*all the good*" relationships as "*mentor type of relationships*". With the people she would always be able to ask, "*what would you do in this situation*", "*I screwed up this, what do you think*". Tamara and Hope found their husbands as important mentor-like individuals who would "*coach*" and "*teach*" them. Catherine and Jennifer also mentioned their husbands as great supporters of their career.

Hope would also tell how she had always been reading books about leadership and developed an interest towards it. By adding the parental guides on how to bring children up she could bring the concept of "*human potential*" to her leadership principle.

*"I also read a whole lot of books about leadership, I've always been inspired about what makes a good leader, I wanted to be a good leader and I wanted to find out how I could be a good leader. I read tons of books about the do's and the don'ts that inspired me. But I still wanted to see it from the human potential. If you give the right*

*job to the right person and they thrive in that then I only felt you can get good success out of that and that's what I want to try bringing to it. I think there's a lot of psychiatry, it's not about just being a good leader. It's about how you do it, it's about how you talk to people, how you listen to people you know."*

## 6. Conclusion

The first main area concluding from the interviews is what constitutes a good leader. There one can discern three major characteristics. The first characteristic required for a good leader seen from the interviews is the need to maintain a balance between being tough and being malleable. This struck to me at various points when going through the data from the interviews, I noticed that the women would have to practice different characteristics as leaders in different situations. The stories of the four female leaders show that one needs to be tough and stubborn, but open to ideas and flexible. Additionally one has to see the bigger picture and simultaneously be very present. The results also strongly indicated that while being very task-orientated and controlling, it is also important to be human and have empathy. Similar characteristics, such as a sense of priorities, empathic listening skills, long-term focus, a service mentality, an ability to balance individual needs and team needs and confidence appear in previous research of an effective leader by Ricketts (2009, no page number). As do characteristics of a transformational leadership (relational-oriented, nurturing and caring, supportive of creativity, attends to the needs of the follower and listens to concerns, cooperation) by Jogulu & Wood (2006, p. 243-246). Ability to combine the rather different characteristics is preferred as suggested by Balasubramanian & Krishnan (2012, p. 48 ) and Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010, p. 85). Even though the previous studies have listed the characteristics and suggest the combination of them that match with the results of my research, the studies would still lack the discussion of balancing between the different characteristics.

The results from my interviews suggest that the women have multiple roles that fit in different situations. Hence they have to be stubborn and rather task-oriented to reach a goal but at the same time be flexible, caring and empathetic. Studies by Ford (cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 387) and Dodd (2012, p. 153, 172) suggest similarly. They concluded that in order to be successful, female leaders would use multiple behavior models of transformational and transactional leadership behavior in different situations. The narratives of the women operating in the animation work environment support the theoretical perspectives of Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010) on contingency theory of how situation guides the leaders' behavior and enables

efficiency. When adding the gender aspect to the contingency theory, Krishnan et al. (cited in Rowley, Hossain & Barry 2010, p. 84) claim that an environment of dynamic instability and complexity require the typically female abilities to alleviate the stress of colleagues, manage conflict resolution, adapt to change and share information and power. The characteristics of the followers are of importance in the contingency theory, determining the appropriate type of leadership. The women confirmed a requirement of certain type of leadership qualities of people working in animation, such as nurturing. What the theories don't bring up is the high amount of self-awareness that balancing between the different characteristics requires, which is demonstrated in my research results. The acquired characteristics they balanced as leaders were hand picked from the leadership styles they had seen. An exception was Hope who had studied leadership literature and parenting literature that she liked to apply to her own leadership skills.

Management of ego rose as the second of the two main characteristics of a leader from the interviews. It really struck me when the interviewees explained how they would put their own ego to the side, work selflessly for the crews and avoid taking things personally. They would compromise and try to find a good way to work with difficult personalities by feeding into their ego and finding empathy to justify their behavior and to understand them better. The reasoning is purely in avoiding conflict situations, enabling the work and reaching for the end goal with whatever it takes. These kinds of communal characteristics (not focusing on oneself, supporting and soothing others and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems) appear in previous studies by Eagly (cited in Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt 2001, p. 5) and Kumra and Vinnicombe (cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 380) and are more often seen with female leaders. Fletcher (2003, p. 12 & 1999) argued that when women are seen practicing such behavior, it is purely seen as feminine and not as a leadership style per se.

Self-awareness was mentioned as an important trait that enabled the leaders to step back and see the bigger picture and adjust their reaction to problems and tricky situations. It seemed to me that self-awareness during their journey in life and work was something that has made the interviewees grow into the authentic persons and

leaders they are today. Avolio & Gardner (2005) suggested that self-awareness alongside the practice of values were the basis when developing towards authentic leadership, which ties to the next paragraph on ethics as one of the main characteristics of a leader.

Practicing ethics in animation leadership was prominent in my research results, which made it the third main characteristics of a leader. The women I interviewed would strongly base their leadership on values and it was important for them to leave their integrity intact. Being human, honest and fair was seen as a valuable capacity for a strong leader. For them it was important to treat people with respect and to make them feel valuable regardless of their position. Similar studies have been made on relational leadership by Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011) that denotes the moral responsibility to treat people as human beings and appreciate them. Additionally studies of authentic leadership by George (cited in George, Sims, McLean & Mayer 2007, p. 130 & 138) suggest that leading with hearts as well as heads and an everyday practice of values in leadership are important characteristics for a leader to possess. Balasubramanian & Krishnan (2012, p. 49) gave an example of the importance of values in transformational leadership that claims that values are what determine if the leader will become villain or virtuous when given the opportunity. This applies also to authentic leadership as Eagly (2005, p. 463) claims that the leader's values must be suitable for the community he/she operates in. It was compelling to hear the women telling how some people (mostly men) they had worked with were very good at distorting the truth and not being realistic about productions. Possibly these occasions have enhanced their connection and appreciation to values of honesty and truthfulness.

Additionally the female leaders mentioned positivity, good attitude and humor as beneficial traits to have as a good leader.

The second main area emerging from the research in addition to what constitutes a good leader is the identification of female characteristics in leading animation productions. All of the interviewees found women and their feminine characteristics favorable in leading animation productions. One of the main feminine characteristics



that came up in the interviews was the women's tendency to be nurturing and caring towards the crew. Alongside the nurturing and caring came empathy and intuitive senses that were seen as feminine characteristics. For me it was interesting to notice how coaching and enabling people to thrive rose from this caring and nurturing trait. Nurturing and caring are favorable characteristics for leaders in animation because of its family-like environment and the quirky, creative, special people that appreciate a lighter touch when managed. Similar research on contingency theory carried out by Rowley, Hossain & Barry (2010) suggests that different leadership styles were needed in different situations. What I could assess from the interview data was that the leadership manifested itself very much in the daily interactions with people. Additionally when the interviewees mentioned the peculiarity of the people working in animation I could see resemblance to a claim by Tomlinson & Colgan (cited in Henry 2009, p. 152) that women are often seen handling workforce that requires careful handling, diplomacy and a mother-like figure. I experienced the nurturing and coaching personally while carrying out the interviews by receiving support and encouragement with my thesis as well as when casually talking about my career.

Another interesting thing I noticed was to notice how the women would call the use of feminine characteristics as something of a "manipulation" to get things moving toward a desired direction. With this feminine trait they would sooth things and feed into people's egos to get the job done and maintain an overall calm production atmosphere. It was a way to handle troublesome persons and make them feel safe about their position. To me the results spoke for the balancing factor of women that is necessary in situations and especially in situations of conflict. This result in my research did not occur in any of the materials I read.

One intriguing thing that came from the interview was the flipside of nurturing and caring. The flipside was called "*emotional attachment*" towards the work and the people, which the women felt was making them weaker and less effective as leaders. For them the ability to have perspective, staying calm and positive as an efficient leader was threatened by getting too emotional. None of the theories I went through discussed the disadvantage of nurturing and caring that seems to occasionally be a real struggle with leaders possessing this behavior trait. For all the female leaders real

life problems and significant events in private life brought perspective that enabled the avoidance of emotional attachment in work life. Apart from gaining perspective and distance, a couple of the female leaders said they had gained more empathy, which was almost a little contradictory.

Lastly it was interesting to see how the gender factor manifested in the women's interviews. The way they had to find a way to be direct and tough without coming across as too aggressive is similar to the studies by Loganathan & Krishnan (2010, p. 55) and Kumra & Vinnicombe (cited in Stead & Elliott 2012, p. 380), who identified that agentic characteristics are not expected or desired by female leaders. Also with some of the female leaders I interviewed there had been occasions when they would use mentors to break barriers and arrange opportunities that were possibly not traditionally available for women. To overcome the prejudices, especially for a young and attractive woman, the women said they earned respect with hard work. A very fascinating exception in the first part of the interview was the narrative of Tamara who didn't incorporate the gender aspect to her own narrative at all even though it was mentioned in the question. This could be due to how she was brought up in the States that during a strong women's equality movement. She was taught that gender was not an issue and that she had the same opportunities as men. Another reason could be that we had discussed some of the gender and work related issues during the time spent ahead of the interview. Nonetheless she had experienced some level of gender discrimination in her career by not getting a job just because she wasn't the breadwinner of a family.

In the research results the female leaders felt that a woman's natural tendency to communicate more and doing it well was one of the characteristics that worked well in leadership of animation. This characteristic appeared in many of the leadership theories such as relational leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen 2011) and transformational leadership (Jogulu & Wood 2006) as well as in contingency theory (Rowley, Hossain & Barry 2010).

During the interviews I felt this undefined female connection that I could have only achieved by being present and face-to-face with my interviewees. I felt they were

secrets that are only shared between women. The women were also so funny that sometimes I laughed really hard. All of the female leaders I interviewed were very open to sharing knowledge and advice they had gathered throughout the years. Their authenticity emerged from the self-awareness the female leaders possessed when they talked about their own development over time. The conclusions they had come to were a result of their experiences, molding them into the individuals they are today. They weren't ashamed to tell about their weaknesses and always added that they still had a lot to learn. During the interviews and listening to the narratives of the leaders, I noticed myself learning more about leadership that I had ever learned in school or from reading books. I believe what happened was the process of transformative learning and growth through narratives (Rossiter 2002).

After the interviews and while doing the transcribing I started to see the female leaders as heroes. To me a hero is the one who is selflessly working towards the good of the others. Not only did I see them solely as givers and enablers, I also saw them as tough and authoritative. As a result, I got the idea to showcase them as female Superheroes that represent care and self-sacrifice for others as well as power and courage. The character designs are carefully thought out from the pose to the expression on their face to best represent the female leaders and their personalities. Furthermore I added speech bubbles for the characters containing some of the most important advice I received from them. In my opinion they don't get enough credit in the animation industry for the work they do and for how much they touch the lives of individuals.

## Tamara



## Hope

KEEP CALM BETWEEN  
THE CHEMISTRIES. YOU DON'T NEED  
TO BE HARSH OR PUSHY, BUT EVERY NOW  
AND THEN YOU HAVE TO SET SOME BORDERS  
AND STIR THEM TO THE RIGHT DIRECTION.  
MAKE SURE EVERYBODY ON A PRODUCTION  
HAS A NICE TIME AND THAT THEY  
FEEL GOOD ABOUT THE  
POSITIONS THEY ARE IN.



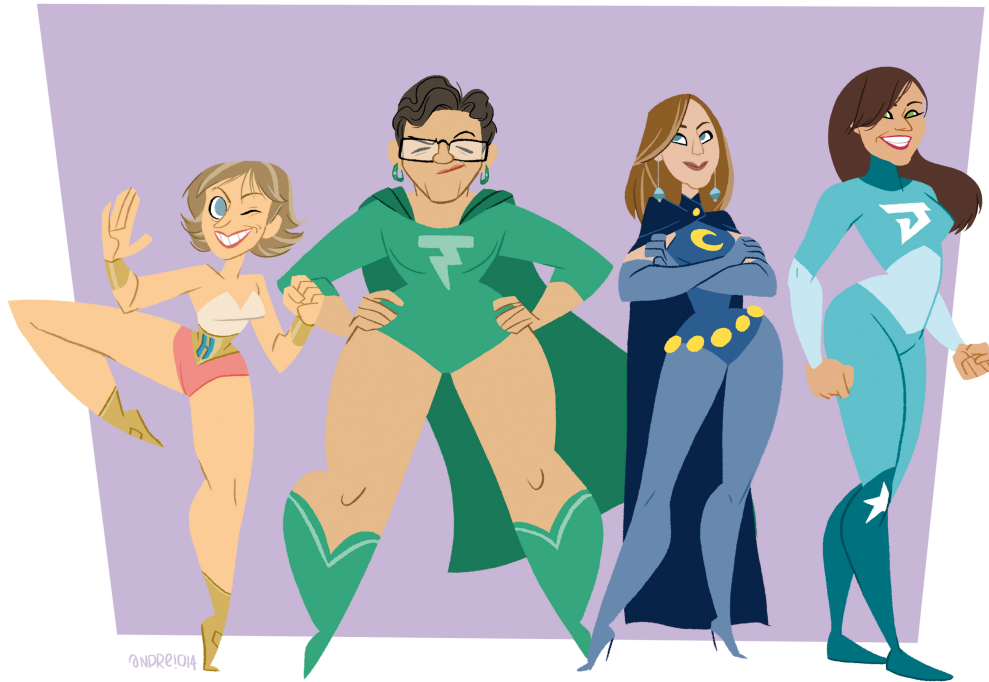
**Jennifer**



## Catherine

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU,  
IT'S ABOUT THE GREATER GOOD.  
THE MINUTE YOUR EGO GETS INVOLVED,  
YOU CAN GET YOUR MOMENTS OF CONFLICTS  
WITH PEOPLE IN SITUATIONS. IF YOU CAN JUST  
STEP BACK AND SEE THE SITUATION FOR WHAT  
IT IS, YOU ARE ABLE TO HELP PEOPLE  
THROUGH AND DO THE BEST  
JOB YOU CAN.





To finish off the conclusions, one of the best pieces of advice I got from the female leaders was to understand the importance of life outside of work. Jennifer's advice in particular remained in my mind when prioritizing four things in my life: my spirit, my health, my family and friends. Work is something that I can drop because it will always bounce back like a rubber ball. She continued explaining that if I drop the four fragile crystal balls of spirit, health, family and friends, I will look back at my life as an old woman and be "*screwed*".

Through this thesis, I have identified feminine properties such as empathy, nurturing and caring, which are qualities that if embraced by a creativity-driven organization, can contribute to its business success and sustainable growth. While it is more likely that female professionals exhibit tendencies for these feminine properties, they can also manifest in their male counterparts. Since these properties are also connected to strong ethics in the leadership theory, I want to stress that having more women in corporate leadership is not only a conscious act of humanity towards gender equality, but also a sound business decision.



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